



Gandhiji and Janmalal

JAMNALAL BAJAJ

[A BRIEF STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER]

BY

T. V. PARVATE

Not Favour of Review



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PREFACE

I must confess that before coming into contact with Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj over three years ago my knowledge about the late Shri Jamnalal Bajaj was quite limited. But *Meri Jeevanyatra*, an autobiographical book in Hindi, written by Shrimati Janakidevi Bajaj, which I read while giving him some little help in his public work, led me to know and read more about Jamnalalji.

Fortunately, a good deal of literature like Jamnalalji's biography in Hindi by Shri Haribhau Upadhyaya, the correspondence between Jamnalalji on the one hand and Gandhiji and other celebrities on the other, published in several volumes, and the reminiscences and appreciations of Jamnalalji by over a hundred eminent Indians, and other books gave me a full idea about his life and personality. I was highly impressed by the goodness, saintliness and selflessness of Jamnalalji and I felt an irrepressible urge to write an estimate of him, chiefly for the benefit of those who, like me, were not sufficiently acquainted with the life and work of this noble soul who had played a leading part in the national movement for freedom.

I must add that a Marathi book, *Kritartha Jeevan*, by Shri D. N. Shikhare, as also a number of discussions with Shri Kamalnayan and Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj were of great help to me in formulating my plan of this book. Whatever good there may be in this

little book is due to all these sources, and whatever shortcomings may be found in it are all mine.

My hearty thanks are also due to Shri K. V. Kamath, personal assistant to the Bajaj Brothers, for having closely scrutinized the manuscript on their behalf and to Shri R. M. Humane for preparing the index as he did for my two previous works on Tilak and Gokhale.

I am highly obliged to the Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, for having readily agreed to undertake the publication of this book.

T. V. PARVATE

EPITOME OF JAMNALAL'S CHARACTERISTICS

The following Sanskrit *shloka* and an *abhang*a from Tukaram, the well-known Marathi poet-saint, aptly sum up Jamnalal's characteristics:

१

सहसा विदधीत न क्रियाम् । अविवेकः परमापदां पदम् ॥
वृणते हि विमृश्यकारिणम् । गुणलुब्धाः स्वयमेव संपदः ॥

२

जोडोनियां घन उत्तम वेव्हारें ।
उदास विचारें वेंच करी ॥

I

No action should be precipitately taken. Want of forethought is the receptacle of great calamities. Wealth is naturally covetous of merit and that Goddess favours only the thoughtful and discriminating.

II

Earn wealth by very appropriate transactions and spend it away with discretion.

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JAMNALAL BAJAJ

CHAPTER I

“AN UNEDUCATED JAT”

A new epoch in modern India's history began with the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa, early in 1915. Gandhiji had become a well-known figure in India even before then because of the crusade he had led in South Africa on behalf of the Indians in that country. Between 1915 and 1920, Gandhiji came to be recognized as the coming man of India by his Satyagraha campaigns in Kheda and Champaran. He took an active part in the deliberations of the Indian National Congress session at Amritsar, in December 1919, and everyone who mattered in Indian public life came to know that a new force was making itself felt in the movement for India's deliverance from political thralldom.

Among those who were attracted to Gandhiji, became intimately associated with him and gained his confidence most, was Jamnalal Bajaj. Young Jamnalal had watched Lokamanya Tilak's campaign for Home Rule and also helped it by contributing generously to a purse of Rs. 15,000 that was presented to him on behalf of the Marwadis of Bombay. But the contact with Tilak did not develop much further. When Gandhiji came on the scene, it was a case of complete surrender on the part of Jamnalal. At the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920, he adopted Gandhiji as his “father” and became his “fifth son”.

There was perhaps none else who so completely identified himself with Gandhiji in all his activities

as Jamnalal Bajaj. His contribution even in any one field of work—political, social or constructive—would have been enough to secure for him an honoured place in India's freedom movement. What transcended all these contributions was, however, his spiritual endeavour, about which not much is known to the people, because public attention was focussed more on the fight for political freedom in which the country was engaged in those hectic days.

As has been pointed out by Kakasaheb Kalelkar in the introduction written by him to the book *To A Gandhian Capitalist*, which is a collection of letters between Gandhiji and Jamnalal Bajaj, "Jamnalalji was a *Sadhaka*, a spiritual aspirant. Early in life, long before he met Gandhiji, he had started on the quest for a Guru for the fulfilment of his aspirations. When he met Gandhiji, he knew that his quest had ended and he completely surrendered himself to his spiritual father. Under his guidance he started his experiments in self-purification which continued throughout his lifetime. It was during the closing months of his life that he reached a spiritual crisis, which culminated in a befitting and noble end to a life well spent in the service of humanity."

Gandhiji always thought of and cited Jamnalal Bajaj as one coming very near to his ideal of trusteeship. Jamnalal did earn lakhs like many other businessmen and industrialists but he regarded himself as a trustee of his wealth and he expected his heirs and successors to do likewise. He would have gladly given up further acquisition of money after he had surrendered himself to Gandhiji, but Gandhiji himself prevented him from doing so, because he was convinced that Jamnalal's ways were clean and honest,

and moreover, the money so earned was spent in philanthropic causes, in the service of humanity. He thus came up to the standard and stood the test laid down not only by Gandhiji but also by Tukaram, the devout poet-saint of Maharashtra who was also a Bania and advised fellow-Banias in one of his *abhangas* to earn by honest means and spend munificently, discriminatingly and resolutely for the good of others.*

About the theory of trusteeship, Gandhiji himself wrote, “It is no makeshift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. No other theory is compatible with non-violence. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it; that possessors of wealth have not acted up to the theory does not prove the falsity of it, it only proves the weakness of the wealthy.” Jamnalal, by his personal example, was the first to demonstrate that, though a capitalist by all means, he could overcome this weakness and become a capitalist of the Gandhian pattern. The House of Tatas, which is making profits of crores of rupees every year, has shown that, like an individual, even a corporation can act in the spirit of trusteeship of the Gandhian pattern, since eighty-five per cent of its profits are spent by this House in charities and public services. If this becomes the general practice with industrial and commercial houses, Gandhiji’s theory will have materialized in practice.

Like his master Gandhiji, Jamnalal had no liking for politics, but was forced into it by circumstances. He participated in the non-co-operation and Satyagraha movements and went to jail. He also led the

The original lines of Tukaram in Marathi are:

जोडोनिया धन उत्तम देव्हारें । उदास बिचारें वेंच करी ॥

agitation for democratization of the princely States and establishment of responsible government therein. But dearest to his heart was constructive work, propagation of Khaddar and other village industries, popularization of Hindustani, uplift and education of women, social reforms like widow marriages, abolition of purdah, intercommunal unity and service of Harijans and the cow.

How many people know or remember that one of the earliest donations of Jamnalal, who knew very little of science, was towards the establishment of a research laboratory of the celebrated Indian botanist and biologist, Jagadish Chandra Bose?

It would be appropriate to point out here, that Jamnalal, although he did not have the conventional education and called himself an "uneducated Jat", had a keen sense of proprieties and a subtle understanding of the shades of meanings of words. He objected to the term *Go-raksha* (cow protection), because he thought that it smacked of patronage and also implied a spirit of antagonism to those who killed the cow; so he suggested the word *Go-seva* (service of the cow) instead of *Go-raksha*. Gandhiji accepted the suggestion at once.

At Gandhiji's behest, Jamnalal in his closing days devoted himself entirely to *Go-seva* work. He shifted from his house at Wardha to a simple thatched hut built at a cost of only Rs. 250. Its floor was unpaved and uneven. It was bare of all furniture except for a low rough cot for sitting and sleeping. He stayed here among the dumb cattle, leading a life of austerity and hardship. He was quite happy and contented in the midst of these surroundings. A few months later he had a sudden attack of cerebral haemorrhage

which proved fatal. He passed away on February 11, 1942.

CHAPTER II EARLY YEARS

Jamnalal was born on November 4, 1889 at Kashi-ka-bas, a village in a petty principality called Sikar within Jaipur State. Kashi-ka-bas literally means "residence of Kashi". The origin of the name is obscure. Some say it is derived from a well-known *chāran* (ballad-singer) by name Kashi who had lived there. It could also mean residence at Kashi or Varanasi, a place sacred to the Hindus. His father Kanhiram was a poor man, but he was blessed with a devoted wife, Birdibai, and three sons.

Kanhiram's poor home was once visited by a distant relation of his, Seth Bachhraj, who had settled down at Wardha and become a millionaire by his commercial ventures. He had come to Kashi-ka-bas in search of a child for adoption. He was accompanied by his wife and his widowed daughter-in-law. His adopted son Ramadhandas had died some time earlier at a young age leaving no child to succeed him. The three of them had come to their native place to find a suitable child for adoption in the family.

Bachhraj knew that Kanhiram had three sons and probably thought that the latter did not need all of them in his poverty. Accompanied by his wife, Sadibai, he made a call at Kanhiram's house one afternoon. Kanhiram was out at the time, but they were cordially received by Birdibai. Sadibai, whose heart was yearning for a child, on seeing the smart

little children in the house, exclaimed, "Sister, you are really a blessed woman. How fine and charming they are!"

"They are as much yours as mine," said Birdibai out of consoling politeness. But Sadibai felt encouraged as she was trying to cast her net for one of the boys. When the hour for parting company arrived, holding the four-year old Jamnalal by one of his fingers, she entreated, "Won't you allow this Jaman to go with me?"

Birdibai was surprised and asked, "What for?"

Sadibai replied, "He is no longer yours. You said only a few minutes back that these children were as much mine as yours."

Birdibai realized the motherly pangs of Sadibai's heart and she sincerely sympathized with that issueless, old lady but she was not prepared to part for ever with any of her sons. Nevertheless, Sadibai's pathetic face and piteous words moved her heart. Kanhiram had returned home in the meantime. When he heard what had transpired, he too was unhappy at the prospect of having to part with one of his children. But, he was a man of his word to whom a promise was sacred. So, he intervened and said to his wife, "You must stand by what you promised. That is the way Harishchandra and Ramchandra followed and Tulsidas has gone into ecstasies over it."

On hearing these words, Birdibai's maternal instinct was in a sense suppressed and silenced. In another sense it was widened, ennobled and universalized. But when Seth Bachhraj offered to compensate them richly for the nominal loss of their son—it was only going to be a transfer to another residence—Kanhiram stoutly refused to accept any monetary

consideration. Neither the father nor the mother relished the idea of parting with their child for money. They would not effect a sale. However, when Bachhraj kept insisting, at last Kanhiram said, "If you must do something, please sink a well for this village."

Bachhraj agreed at once and a well was sunk in the village. Only those, who know the difficulties experienced by the people of these waterless tracts for fetching drinking water from long distances, can appreciate fully the significance of Kanhiram's request. To the people of Kashi-ka-bas who had no well in their village and had to walk a mile or two to a nearby village to fetch water, this well was a veritable boon. Thus was Jamnalal's birth in another family symbolized by a noble act of altruism.

Jamnalal was married at the age of thirteen and his bride was only about nine years old. Those were days of child marriages and among some communities even babies in cradles were solemnly married off by their parents and the marriages were considered perfectly valid. Often the family barber, trusted friends, relatives or priests acted as agents in arranging suitable matches. The last mentioned had the additional advantage of astrological knowledge as the tallying of the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom was regarded as quite an important factor in a marriage settlement.

So, in conformity with age-old custom, Jamnalal was betrothed at the age of ten to Janaki, aged six, daughter of Seth Girdharlal Jajodia of Jaora in Indore State. He was a devotee of Lord Krishna, a follower of the Vaishnava faith. Daily he worshipped the images of Vyankatesh, Rukmini and Satyabhama.

Like almost every Hindu wife of old, his wife had completely merged her identity in his. Their daughter, with a dark complexion and pock-marks on her face, could by no means be described as beautiful. But physical beauty mattered little in the calculations of those who looked after the eternal and spiritual good of the bride and the bridegroom. Family renown and culture mattered most. The Brahmana priest from Wardha, who was entrusted with the task of finding a suitable bride, approved of Janaki. There was first the betrothal and, about three years later, the marriage was solemnized at Wardha with a great deal of pomp and ceremony. Jamnalal was seated on an elephant with his bride and taken in a procession to the accompaniment of indigenous and Western bands. There was great feasting and merry-making for many days.

Jamnalal was in the midst of wealth and splendour but he never succumbed to their corruptive influence. He was a born ascetic. Indeed, when he came of age, he regretted every now and then, that his parents had given him away as an adopted heir to Seth Bachhraj. He hated the custom of adoption. A rustic boy, he became a prisoner in the golden cage of the Bachhraj household and very much disliked the change, even though he was provided with all good things of life.

From 1896, when he was seven, he was sent to school. He picked up the three R's and acquired a nodding acquaintance with the English language. In March 1900, he said goodbye to his school for ever. That was all the regular schooling he had. But being gifted with a sharp intellect, he digested well whatever little he read and did a lot of thinking. He went on

gathering knowledge from experience. There are, indeed, very few who studied and understood life's book as Jamnalal did. His education, such as it was, was through the medium of Marathi. But he achieved workable mastery over Gujarati, Hindi and English as he grew in years.

His ascetic tendency was noticeable even when he was a young boy. Another important characteristic was his sense of self-respect and firm resolution. Once, Jamnalal was playing *chowpat** with his friends. Bachhraj did not like the game and flared up at Jamnalal. He was a man of quick temper and had a foul tongue. When he was in a temper, he did not spare any one. Jamnalal could not be an exception. When Bachhraj shot out his angry words, the boy was deeply hurt. He threw away the dice and the pieces and retired to his room. He resolved that he would never again play at that game and he kept his resolve till death.

Jamnalal had come in possession of a rich fortune, but he was prepared to renounce it all. He was only seventeen when a crisis arose which made this patent. There was a wedding at some relative's house and Bachhraj was naturally anxious to display his wealth and splendour on the occasion. All the members of his family and dependents were bedecked with costly jewellery and clad in silk clothes. But Jamnalal had not put on a particular pearl necklace which Bachhraj wanted him to wear. That was enough to make the old man lose his temper. He commanded Jamnalal to put on the necklace. Jamnalal begged to be excused saying, "What does it matter if I don't wear it just once?" Bachhraj was beside himself with rage. He

* A game of dice

shouted, "You have become very proud; you are elated because you have come in easy possession of easy wealth. You have the cheek to talk back to me. What is the good of such an heir? You only love my riches and not me."

Bachhraj went on in this strain under the spell of anger as he was never used to being contradicted or questioned. But his outpourings made Jamnalal think deeply. He realized that possession of wealth and the power that came with it corrupted men. Wealth, therefore, must be despised and spurned and not worshipped. In any case one must not sell one's self-respect for money. He pondered over the situation for a whole night and decided to renounce his fortune and leave the house. He addressed a letter to his adopted grandfather. Its language was outspoken, clear and unequivocal, but there was no touch of anger or bitterness in it. It was a piece of singularly restrained writing, which opened out his heart with absolute honesty, leaving no room for misunderstanding. Jamnalal wrote in Marwadi and what follows is its English rendering by Mahadev Desai:*

"You were so angry with me today. It was God's will and you had a right to be angry in that you have adopted me. It is not your fault, rather it is the fault of those who gave me in adoption. The money is yours and you may do whatever you like with it. I am sorry for the expenses you have incurred on me so far, but from this moment, I will not touch a pie out of your money. I have no right against you and I would implore you not to be anxious about me.

* Quoted from *Harijan*, 22-2-'42, p. 46.

May God keep you for many more years. Wherever I go, I shall pray for your welfare. Pray pardon me for having irritated you. I hope you never believed that I served you because of your money. Please dismiss that thought from your mind, if you ever had it. I care not for wealth. I pray that I may never forget the name of God who alone can keep me happy in this and the next life. And pray be of good cheer and don't sorrow over my going. All earthly relationship is hollow. The worldly possessions hold you in their grip. Thank God you have freed me today from their deadly grip. And please rest assured that I will not go to law to claim a pie of what is yours. This is a regular release deed on a stamped paper and it declares that you owe me no obligation whatsoever. I owe no debts that you need repay. Use your money in charity; swear not at *sadhus* and others as is your wont, but please them with whatever money you can give. I am taking nothing from the house, nothing but the clothes that cover me."

Jamnalal even affixed stamps on this document in order to lend it full legal effect. Such drastic, magnanimous action on his part at the tender age of seventeen naturally melted the heart of the impetuous and excitable, but very humane, old Bachhraj. He was overwhelmed with remorse and he would not rest until he had traced Jamnalal and brought him back home. When Jamnalal was found, he was persuaded with great difficulty to return home. Thereafter Bachhraj simply doted on him.

About six months after this incident, on June 3, 1907, Seth Bachhraj passed away. He left behind

him property valued at about five to six lakhs of rupees, out of which he had donated Rs. 75,000 to the Lakshminarayan temple at Wardha. He had also given munificent donations to institutions like the Marwadi Vidyalaya at Wardha. He was a capable but old-fashioned merchant, who had earned in business by thousands. Jamnalal was expected to follow in his footsteps, but his spiritual urge led him along a different path.

After the death of his grandfather Jamnalal always felt that he had no moral right to enjoy the wealth he had once renounced. Throughout his life he treated it as a trust to be utilized for the public good. It is known that he evaluated the entire wealth which he had inherited and, after adding compound interest on it up to the date of the calculation, gave away the total amount to charity. This he did more than once.

CHAPTER III

AT THE FEET OF GANDHIJI

Jamnalal's spiritual urge was for a guide and *guru* who would lead him in life along straight and correct path. He felt attracted to a number of eminent leaders in public life. He met Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who had evoked in him great respect. He spent some time with Rabindranath Tagore. He met Lokamanya Tilak, whose *Kesari* he had been reading since he was a boy of thirteen. He appreciated very much the assertive and militant tone of Tilak's writings and his way of awakening and organizing people to fight injustice. He also met several *sadhus* and religious *gurus*. But none of them could give him the spiritual solace he was seeking for. Earlier, in 1906, when a

scheme was started to publish a Hindi edition of *Kesari* from Nagpur, Jamnalal sent a hundred rupees as his contribution. He was hardly seventeen years of age at that time. He used to get a rupee every day as pocket money from Bachhraj. It was from his savings that he sent the donation. This was, perhaps, his first consciously and intelligently made donation to a public cause. Later in his life, he gave away by lakhs but nothing could excel in nobility and joy this first gift of his. He himself used to say, "I can never experience the delight and the happiness after giving lakhs that I derived by that small donation of only a hundred rupees."

But his thirst for a guide was not slaked even by Tilak. He wanted to make a complete dedication of his life. But, as it turned out, he had to wait till Gandhiji came to India. Even as he was reading newspaper accounts of Gandhiji's Satyagraha campaign in South Africa, his heart went out to him and he often said to himself, "What a noble and godly soul is Gandhiji! When will he come back to India? Whenever he comes, I must get near him and make him my own!"

At last Gandhiji was in India early in January 1915. He placed himself entirely at the disposal of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who asked him to take a vow of silence for a year and study India on the spot by visiting the different provinces and making his own estimate of the situation. Gandhiji said to Gokhale that being a Gujarati he would like to serve India through the service of Gujarat to start with. Gokhale agreed. The Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati (Ahmedabad) was started and Gokhale looked after its expenses in the early stages. Gokhale died on

February 19, 1915. From the month of May, Gandhiji finally made Sabarmati his headquarters.

Jamnalal visited the Ashram once, and repeated the visits at frequent intervals. He stayed there for varying periods and watched Gandhiji's methods of work at close quarters. He came to the conclusion that he had at last found his spiritual guide. For Gandhiji was such a one as saint Ramdas has described: "Bow down to him whose steps are in consonance with his utterances." Jamnalal had been searching for such a *guru*.

Gandhiji was also attracted to this earnest young man. So the contact grew closer and closer and Jamnalal began to take more and more interest in Gandhiji's activities off and on. Jamnalal respectfully proposed to Gandhiji that he should shift his Ashram to Wardha, where he promised to give him all help. Gandhiji repeated to Jamnalal what he had told Gokhale. But he at last agreed to send Vinoba Bhave, one of his close associates, to Wardha. Vinoba went there to take charge of the Satyagraha Ashram in 1921. The Bajaj family came to regard him as their preceptor and he became like a member of the family.

A year earlier, at the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1920, Jamnalal took a momentous decision which was to change the whole course of his life. He had already come to regard Gandhiji as his *guru* and follow him. But now he decided to "adopt" Gandhiji as his "father" and become his "fifth son". Gandhiji was at first surprised at this strange request, but he nevertheless agreed to it.

Thus Jamnalal became Gandhiji's adopted son, and Gandhiji became his adopted father. The first

adoption in the family of Seth Bachhraj was legal and made without the full knowledge and consent of the adoptee. This time the adoption was only moral, but consciously made by both parties and was highly consequential for the lives of both. By becoming Gandhiji's son Jamnalal surrendered himself and his all to him without reservation. It was an event that immensely affected not only Jamnalal but even Gandhiji, and ultimately the fortunes of the country as well.

Since the adoption, Gandhiji used to address Jamnalal as a Hindu father usually addresses his son. The word used in the Indian languages is *Chiranjiva* (abbreviated into Chi.) which literally means "immortal" but in popular parlance "long-lived". In one of his communications, written in 1924, Gandhiji, however, addressed him as "Bhai Jamnalal". It cut Jamnalal to the quick. He became restless over it. He wrote back to Gandhiji to ask: "Am I no longer fit to be your son?" Gandhiji wrote a lengthy letter in reply:

"Chi. Jamnalal,

Your grief has made me sad. I avoided the use of Chi. in the letter to you because it was not closed; and because I could not decide on the spur of the moment as to the propriety or otherwise of the prefix Chi. as applied to you, being read by all those who happened to see the letter. So, I used the prefix Bhai.

"How are we to arrive at a decision as to whether you deserve to be Chi. (i.e., my son) and whether I deserve to be adopted as father? Just as you have misgivings about yourself, I have similar misgivings about my own self. If

you are imperfect, so am I. I ought to have given more thought to my own qualifications before allowing myself to be adopted as your father. I have, however, yielded to your affection and I have taken the place of your father. May God make me worthy of that privilege. If any defects or deficiencies persist in you, they will betoken the defect of my own contact with you.

"I am confident that both of us will achieve success in our effort to remove our shortcomings. If, however, we fail, God, who wants in us a spirit of dedication and can look into the inmost recesses of the heart, will deal with us according to our deserts. I will, therefore, consider you as Chi. as long as I do not deliberately harbour impurity within myself."

Since this mutually and willingly agreed relationship was established, Gandhiji's ever-increasing association proved to be the greatest moral and spiritual influence on Jamnalal. He became more and more introspective. He became his own critic, and the one yearning of his heart was to deserve the blessing that was conferred on him. He frankly placed before Gandhiji the entire working of his mind. He laid bare his heart before him. He began to place before Gandhiji all the problems he was confronted with for solution and Gandhiji in his turn tried to give him complete satisfaction even on every trifle and without any mental reservations whatsoever. Step by step and day by day, Jamnalal allowed himself to be completely shaped by Gandhiji. Jamnalal achieved the spiritual satisfaction which was his quest. His devotion to Gandhiji was beyond measure. He considered no sacrifice too great to make for Gandhiji.

Jamnalal fully realized that Gandhiji had completely identified himself with the whole of humanity. He was the one person who had really mastered the teaching of *Vedanta*, namely, the oneness of the whole Universe and God. He realized that Gandhiji made no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, and his was a wholly dedicated and utterly selfless life. If India and the world followed him, it would be good for humanity. This faith grew in him with every day that passed. Jamnalal realized that Gandhiji was a living embodiment of what a *yogi* should be like, that he had attained what was called an equipoised state of mind and that the whole country looked up to him for personal and collective guidance as to a hoary patriarch.

Jamnalal used to say, "No one, who has had the good fortune of being Gandhiji's associate and has made an effort to understand his approach to men and affairs and attitude towards life, will ever get tired of life. He will be filled with an enthusiasm to work and a zest for life. He will always be prepared to do his duty and be content with his lot. It may be that Gandhiji's way of attainment of Swaraj involves delay but it is a sure way; there are no risks in it and whoever follows that way is bound to attain Swaraj for himself if not for others. That is my firm faith."

Close association with Gandhiji afforded many opportunities to Jamnalal to come in contact with other leaders of the country in various fields of activity. He was able to study Gandhiji in the midst of these men as also by himself. He came in contact with men like Dinshaw Wacha, Surendranath Banerjea, Satyendra Prasanna Sinha, Bhupendranath Basu, Srinivasa Sastri, C. Y. Chintamani and others.

There is an interesting event during Jamnalal's early association with Gandhiji. At the end of 1915, the 30th Congress session was held in Bombay, over which Sir S. P. Sinha presided. Gandhiji, who had just returned from South Africa, attended this session. Incidentally, it was at this session that a resolution was carried allowing the militant nationalists led by Tilak, then called extremists, to join the Congress. Jamnalal had made arrangements for Gandhiji's stay at the Marwadi Vidyalyaya. Gandhiji was always on the move in order to explain the South African Indian question in all its bearings to the various Congress leaders. He had to go about in some vehicle to save time. There were no taxi-cabs in those days and even private cars were few. Jamnalal had not purchased a car for himself though he could have afforded one. But, now, to avoid borrowing the cars of friends for Gandhiji's use he purchased a new car and kept it entirely at his disposal. This greatly facilitated Gandhiji's work, and also gave Jamnalal an opportunity to be constantly in Gandhiji's company and study his methods of working and dealing with people.

Jamnalal was constantly studying Gandhiji. Always unruffled, considerate, peaceful and optimistic—that is how Gandhiji impressed him. In later years he recorded his impressions about Gandhiji in the following transparent words:

“For the last 24 years I have been constantly associated with Gandhiji. During this period I have closely watched his activities in all fields of work. I have travelled about with him, I have also participated in his Ashram life, I have stayed near him during his fasts, I have been nursing him during his illnesses. I was witness

to his many important negotiations and discussions, and I have tried my utmost to share the burden of his public activities. At every stage I was continuously influenced by his many qualities. My faith in him went on increasing. I went on identifying myself with him more and more. Today he is my ideal and my guiding star whose command I obey. His affection is my life."

CHAPTER IV

SOLDIER OF FREEDOM FIGHT

Ever since he was quite young, Jamnalal Bajaj was anxious for the liberation of the motherland from foreign domination as he was for the liberation of his own soul from the shackles of *Maya*. What politicians like Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Tilak and Gokhale described in elegant English as the dwarfing of Indian manhood and emasculation of the whole Indian population as a result of foreign domination, economic and political, was realized by Jamnalal in his personal experiences. He also realized that the Indian minions of the foreign government were even worse than the foreigners themselves, and felt that the Sanskrit poet was wholly right when he said that the sands of the beach, to whom the sun imparts his heat, are even more scorching than the rays of the hot sun!

He had gone through a couple of such experiences. Once a police party had camped at a nearby village. They were quite well looked after by the village people as usual, but the party wanted special treatment by way of specially prepared costly sweets. When they were not forthcoming, some members of the

party became angry and one of them was so enraged that he gave a severe beating to one of the villagers with the result that the man was laid up for a long time. The man cried out in anguish as he was being kicked, whipped and beaten, and those pitiful cries haunted Jamnalal for months. They planted in his mind the seeds of disgust of foreign rule.

Once a fire broke out in the house of a relative of one of Seth Bachhraj's servants. Although the house was afire, the poor man would not leave the room where his family's valuables and jewellery were locked, perhaps fearing that they might be stolen. A police party that came to quench the fire, instead of helping him to recover his valuables, so belaboured the man that at last he became unconscious and had to be removed on a stretcher to a safe place. Jamnalal was red with rage and even old Bachhraj's blood boiled at the police cruelty. He appealed to the higher authorities to look into the matter, but it was to no effect. On the contrary, Bachhraj himself was threatened with arrest for interference with the work of Government officers on duty. This made a deep impression on Jamnalal. He began to think that the terror which the British had struck in the popular heart must be eradicated and self-respect must be fully restored.

Reference has already been made to his attraction for Tilak and the *Kesari*. He saw that Tilak, by his individual example as well as through his powerful weekly journal, was developing the power of resistance to wrong and injustice among the people. Jamnalal realized that Tilak's cause was righteous and his approach courageous. He came to believe that selfless service of the people led to the liberation of one's

soul. He said, "If someone tells me that one who serves his country and fellowmen would not attain liberation even in a hundred births, I shall not worry. On the contrary, I shall be very glad. What is there to worry about if one has to spend a hundred lives in pure and selfless service of humanity? One should only guard against the danger of getting enmeshed in worldly attachments and forgetting the goal of human endeavour."

Jamnalal's spirit of patriotism was put to test quite often. Being born with a silver spoon in one's mouth may be considered fortunate, but it has its own disadvantages. The high officials of the Government often make the rich a special prey of theirs. Jamnalal was created an honorary magistrate in 1908 just when he was eighteen. Ten years later, in the new year honours list of 1918 he was given the title of Rai Bahadur. It had come to him without his seeking. Seth Bachhraj had also been a Rai Bahadur in his time. Jamnalal could not easily spurn the title. He was not quite comfortable with the decoration, yet he did not think it necessary at that time to offend the Government by not accepting the offer.

Jamnalal went to Gandhiji to seek his blessings. He told Gandhiji that he had never craved for the title nor even desired it. On receipt of a telegraphic request from the Chief Commissioner of C. P. he had purchased war bonds worth Rs. 50,000. The Chief Commissioner appreciated this as also his efforts to promote education. It might be that because of this the Chief Commissioner had recommended to the Government that the title should be conferred on him. Gandhiji observed on the occasion, "Use the new honour well. It is easy to live down an insult, but

difficult to live down an 'honour'. Honours, titles, etc., are dangerous things. They have been more abused than used. I would wish you to make proper use of them. I hope it may never come in the way of your patriotism and your own spiritual advancement."

The time soon came when Jamnalal gave up the title in pursuance of the resolution in favour of non-co-operation which Congress passed at the special session at Calcutta in September 1920 and reiterated at Nagpur later. But even while he was a Rai Bahadur he always kept Gandhiji's advice in mind and never allowed this encumbrance to interfere with his usual way of life and his association with national leaders, whom the Government did not like. He freely and openly participated in the Congress and Home Rule movements. National leaders often stayed at his house as his guests and he was always to them a warm host. This annoyed the Government.

A high official once asked Jamnalal to see him in his Nagpur office. He was shown in as soon as he called. Asking him to be seated, the official, with a police report file in front of him, began to interrogate Jamnalal:

"Do you see Mr. Gandhi quite often?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Is it true that Congress leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Nekiram Sharma and others stay as your guests?"

"Yes, Sir."

"You are aware that you are regarded as a respectable gentleman and Government esteems your services."

"Yes, Sir."

"This means that a special responsibility rests on you and Government expects you will carry it out."

"It is perfectly all right. But Government must know that I have nothing to do with the political opinions of those who stay with me as my guests. If you have any reports regarding my political views and if you want any explanation from me regarding them, you may ask for it. But if Government thinks that I should not entertain guests who are my friends, whether they agreed with me in political views or not, it is not fair. No self-respecting person can submit to such arbitrary desires of Government."

"Quite so, quite so," said the official in a persuasive tone. "It is quite true that no harm would be done by your associating with Mr. Gandhi, because you are quite reasonable and wise. But it may affect other people adversely and so you must be careful."

Jamnalal was not impressed by this sweet talk. He retorted, "It is my duty to treat my friends with hospitality when they come to me as my guests. As for Gandhiji, I have the greatest respect for him and I can never sever my relations with him."

This was sufficient provocation for the official. Jamnalal had some time earlier requested the Chief Commissioner to perform the opening ceremony of the new building of the High School at Wardha. The official said, "If your attitude is to remain as it is, the Chief Commissioner will not be able to comply with your request." Jamnalal replied, "That depends on his pleasure. I cannot change my attitude merely to suit his wishes."

The official was much put out. Banging the table he blurted out, "After securing a Rai Bahadurship, you have started making friends with the nationalist

leaders. You want to benefit by the friendship of both."

Jamnalal refused to be provoked. He said calmly, "I never asked for any Rai Bahadurship and even before it came to me unsought, my relations with the Congress leaders were exactly as they are now."

"Very well. You may settle the whole matter with the Deputy Commissioner of Wardha," said the official rising in his chair as if to conclude the talk.

Rising in his seat, Jamnalal affirmed, "There is no question of any settlement. My friends will be my guests hereafter as before."

Although Jamnalal became a prominent personality in the country's movement for political freedom only with the advent of the non-co-operation movement in 1921, he had been an adherent of the Indian National Congress ever since 1906 when the Swadeshi and boycott movement was launched as a consequence of the partition of Bengal. He was a staunch advocate of the Swadeshi movement and, in his own life, he had been using only Swadeshi mill cloth since then. He advocated boycott of British cloth and participated in bonfires of it. He had also faith in the cult of national education. He had his own children educated along national lines in the Ashrams and through private teachers and luckily he had an excellent preceptor in Vinoba under his own roof.

In 1921 he took to Khaddar. He gave up his title. He boycotted the law courts, when the non-co-operation movement started, all the foreign clothes in his household were collected together, put in bullock-carts and led in a procession to the place of a huge bonfire to be lighted with them. Many other people

in Wardha followed him. Valuable apparel belonging to the temples was also taken out. The huge heap that all these clothes made was set afire by his son, Kamalnayan. Even Janakidevi, who had a large number of silk and woollen clothes and garments with borders of gold and silver thread, gave them all for the bonfire. It was found that some three seers of gold and silver were collected from the ashes.

Earlier, while Jamnalal was on tour he had written to his wife: "Now neither you nor I can use any foreign cloth. Our whole family must use Khaddar and take to plain living. We must follow this path steadily and steadfastly. No foreign cloth must find its way in the family temple any more and you must see to it." She faithfully followed his advice.

In what great esteem and respect Jamnalal was held by all national leaders was demonstrated when he was unanimously elected Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920. Jamnalal thought that he was not worthy of the honour, because he was aware of his shortcomings, imperfect knowledge of English being one of them. He was not highly educated. Besides, he was young and inexperienced. So, in September 1920, he communicated to Gandhiji his inability to assume the responsibility with which he was sought to be honoured. He suggested that Pandit Bishan Datta Shukla should be elected to the office. Gandhiji telegraphed to him to say that if Pandit Shukla was not ready to accept the Chairmanship, he should accept it. Gandhiji was not keeping well in those days. On his behalf, Mahadev Desai wrote in explanation of the telegram: "Bapuji has given you his consent to accept the Chairmanship, the main reason being that it is not desirable that

an unfit person should occupy this position. Your objections on the score of young age and ignorance (lack of education) are not acceptable to him.... He thinks you can certainly prepare your speech in Hindi and an English version of it could be kept ready for distribution."

This was the last word on the point and Jamnalal agreed to become Chairman of the Reception Committee. As he was a leading businessman, his example was likely to be followed by other businessmen and so the strength of the business community would back up the national movement. That was the way the Nagpur people looked at the matter. So when Jamnalal's consent was secured, there was a wave of admiration for the young, wealthy businessman; and, when he made his Chairman's speech, the admiration increased a hundredfold. He said in the course of his speech: "The more and greater our difficulties, the more onerous will become the responsibilities of the Congress; and the more Swaraj-conscious we become, the greater will be our self-confidence and the nearer Swaraj will come."

Discussing the political situation, he said:

"The British Government is clearly guilty of a breach of the pledges given in regard to the maintenance of the Khilafat. Instead of granting responsible government to India, the Government has passed a Reforms Act which has been declared inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing by the Congress; and immediately in its train was passed the Rowlatt Act which gave a perfectly free hand to the police to persecute the people. All those events have opened the eyes of the Indian people and they have come

to the conclusion that their condition is becoming worse and worse under the British rule. There are only two ways out of this impasse: open armed rebellion or universal non-co-operation. Armed rebellion is inconsistent with India's culture and way of life. It is only non-co-operation which is acceptable and suited to our circumstances. . . .

"I am wholly confident that we shall attain Swaraj by non-co-operation and we do not want any foreign help. Let us remember what great sacrifices have been made for freedom by Ireland, Russia and China and prepare ourselves for similar sacrifices."

Jamnalal then made a fervent appeal to the business community. He said:

"I have a special claim on my brothers of the business community on this occasion and I wish to make a special appeal to them. Whatever we have earned under British rule has been earned not by enriching our country or countrymen but by making our Motherland and her children poorer. The consequence is that about ten crores of our countrymen cannot have one square meal a day. Fellow-businessmen, our trade, industry and commerce will flourish a hundredfold by our participation in the great national endeavour for Swaraj. We must give up our attitude of indifference and we must shed our fear complex. If we do not do the right thing on this occasion, we shall shut the doors of prosperity to our future generations and we shall be committing a moral crime against the nation. We must sacrifice our earnings in this great national

effort for freedom in the eternal interest of the future generations."

Jamnalal did not merely preach. He acted as he preached. He had been working for 20 hours a day to make the Nagpur session of the Congress a complete success. In conformity with the resolution of the Congress he gave up his Rai Bahadurship. He withdrew all his suits pending in the various law courts. He returned his arms licences and surrendered the revolver and the rifle he had. He put up with losses of thousands of rupees. He established arbitration machinery in a number of places and advised fellow businessmen to have their disputes settled through arbitration. He gave a donation of one lakh of rupees to the Congress in order to help such lawyers as had given up practice to join the national movement and had no other means of subsistence.

Seeing all this, the Congress leaders realized that the freedom movement had really made a great acquisition in Jamnalal. He was elected a member of the Working Committee of the Congress. He was also given the office of its treasurer.

When the freedom battle started with the non-co-operation movement, Jamnalal threw himself into it heart and soul. The banner of the movement was the tricolour and thousands rallied round it. It became a symbol of India's will to freedom. The flag began to flutter everywhere, in every town and hamlet, and therefore it became an eyesore to the officials.

On one occasion when the flag was taken in a huge procession by the citizens of Nagpur, the officials of that place could not tolerate this. The police took possession of the flag and forfeited it. The citizens of Nagpur decided to pick up the gauntlet that was

thrown to them. In the National Week celebration in 1923, which was observed in memory of the Jalian-wala Bag martyrs, they decided to take the tricolour flag in procession. When this announcement was made the Government banned the procession which was to have started on April 13. Gandhiji was then in jail. The people of Nagpur decided to assert their right to hold the tricolour flag aloft and carry it in a procession. Jamnalal who had gone to Calcutta was on his way back to Wardha. A number of young men met him at the Nagpur station and requested him to be the leader of this Flag Satyagraha. Jamnalal asked them to wait for a while, as he wanted to give serious thought to the matter before taking up the big responsibility.

He pondered deeply over the matter. He felt that it was his clear duty to participate in the movement that was started to uphold the prestige of the national flag, and to respond to the call for leadership of the movement that was made on him. It was a great responsibility, but he made up his mind to shoulder it. He prepared to face whatever hardships or sufferings such action would entail. He only prayed for enough strength to put up with all that.

On April 22, Jamnalal reached Nagpur. He found the whole atmosphere highly enthusiastic and encouraging. He knew that such enthusiasm and energy must be directed in proper channels and must not go waste. Disciplining the enthusiasm was of great importance in the whole campaign.

A public meeting was held in the evening. Thousands of people gathered there. Addressing the meeting in firm and well measured terms, Jamnalal said: "We shall never tolerate any insult to our national

flag. In order to uphold the prestige of this national emblem, we shall embark upon Satyagraha from the first of May. We must be ready to stake our all for this purpose. The essence of Satyagraha is to undergo suffering in order to convert the heart of the opponent, for whom we must have no hatred in our hearts, and we all must never lose sight of this." Jamnalal's words went straight to the hearts of the people.

Volunteers from all parts of the country were gathering at Nagpur to join the Satyagraha. On the first of May, only ten Satyagrahis were selected to offer Satyagraha. With the tricolour flag in their hands they began to walk through the streets of Nagpur towards the Civil Lines. They were singing Iqbal's inspiring song, "*Sare jahanse achchha Hindostan hamara*", as they were marching along. The whole city was full of enthusiasm. The Satyagrahis were watched with admiration from every house-top. Hundreds of people gathered in the streets and cried *jai* to the tricolour flag. The procession went on like this for three miles. The ten Satyagrahis were offered flowers everywhere in their honour. The spectacle at what is known now as Jhanda Chowk was thrilling. Ten resolute men stood firm with the national flag. Two furlongs behind them there was another batch of ten, equally brave soldiers, and in between them stood Jamnalal as their commander. Three furlongs away stood thousands of citizens watching the scene.

Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code had been enforced and a ban placed on all processions and meetings of more than 25 persons within the limits of the Civil Lines. But those men started in the direction of the Civil Lines to defy the ban. There was a lathi-charge by the police on the batch that

carried the tricolour flag and violated the ban. The police even used the poles of the flags to beat the Satyagrahis, and dragged them and left them by the roadside.

These events were repeated day after day with new batches of volunteers offering Satyagraha every day. This naturally led to resentment everywhere and volunteers from all parts of the country began to flock to Nagpur in larger numbers.

It was decided to offer mass Satyagraha on June 18. When the Government came to know about this, 250 volunteers were woken up from their sleep and placed under arrest on the previous night. Among them were even the cooks who were preparing food for the Satyagrahis. As the leader of these Satyagrahis, Jamnalal was arrested, along with Vinoba who had also participated in the movement. All of them were sentenced to imprisonment for one month, but only Jamnalal who was the organizer of the Satyagraha was given 18 months' hard labour and fined Rs. 3,000.

Jamnalal was calm and quiet during the trial. He was giving replies in Hindi to questions put to him by the Government pleader. At one stage in the proceedings, there was an interesting interlude. Jamnalal said he was ready to suffer the most rigorous punishment possible. The interpreter by mistake translated this to say that Jamnalal was asking for highest punishment among his comrades because he was the greatest offender. The Government pleader was confused, and explained to the Court that what Jamnalal meant must be that he wanted the maximum punishment permissible under the law. After some discussion, the Court had to refer to Jamnalal as to what he had

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meant. Jamnalal said that as far as he was concerned both the wordings could be taken to be identical to what he had said, and the Court could choose any interpretation it liked. The Magistrate was surprised at this voluntary offer to undergo the maximum suffering.

Jamnalal did not want any special facility or concession from the Government. He had embarked upon the course of breaking the law with a full understanding of its implications. He declined to pay the fine. The police went to his residence and confiscated a car, a horse-carriage and a cash box, which contained Rs. 400 to recover the fine. The car and the carriage were auctioned twice, but no one would come forward to bid for them. For a long time they were lying at Wardha. At last the car was sent to Rajkot for auction, but even there no Indian was ready to purchase it. Eventually an English officer took it for a nominal price.

Meanwhile, the Flag Satyagraha was gathering momentum, day by day. Government's repression was met by popular resistance. The Nagpur jail was soon overcrowded with prisoners and so the Satyagrahis began to be sent to the Akola jail. This jail also was filled very soon. Drastic punishments and solitary confinements were given to some. Yet the Satyagraha tide was rushing on. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took the place of Jamnalal and the Satyagraha went on continuously in the same way for 109 days, and 1,848 persons courted imprisonment. New volunteers kept on coming. Impressed by this demonstration of the inexorable popular will, Government decided to surrender and recognize the people's right to hold the tricolour aloft and carry it anywhere they

liked, whether singly or in a procession. As a consequence on August 18, one hundred volunteers carrying the tricolour flag marched triumphantly through the Civil Lines, although entry into the area was still nominally prohibited. They were neither obstructed nor placed under arrest. On September 3, all Satyagrahis from the Nagpur and Akola jails were released. A police car went to the Nagpur jail to take Jamnalal away and leave him at his residence, but he preferred to walk home with his fellow-Satyagrahis. It was a grand procession in which thousands joined. All along the route the Satyagrahis and their leader received a grand ovation from the people.

When the decision was first taken to launch the Satyagraha, Jawaharlal Nehru was not in its favour, but as a true disciplinarian he submitted to the decision. When the struggle started he even sent an encouraging telegram to Jamnalal in which he said, "I am watching the Nagpur struggle with glorious admiration. I wish I was one of the fortunate volunteers who are being placed under arrest. I shall certainly send bands of volunteers to help you from the United Provinces."

When Jamnalal was placed under arrest, Nehru was in Nagpur. He addressed a public meeting on that day, at which he said:

"I did not fully realize the propriety and significance of the Flag Satyagraha before coming to Nagpur and I was sad. I felt that this fight should not have been precipitated when there was already a ban on organization of volunteers' corps. But when I noticed what tremendous work had been done here, I was satisfied. As a camp-follower I know only one

thing—to work, to fight. The example of Nagpur is worthy of being copied everywhere. The Government opposition is only strengthening our hands. Other provinces will surely give assistance, but even if they do not, I am convinced that your province will push on with the struggle.”

After Jamnalal's release from the Nagpur jail Vitthalbhai Patel said, “When it was darkness everywhere, Jamnalal alone spread light by his suffering and sacrifice.” Maulana Mahomed Ali wired, “Well done my brave Bania, longing to touch your feet. Kitchlew joins.”

C. Rajagopalachari wrote in *Young India* of 21st June 1923 (p. 205):

“No one had tasted like Jamnalalji the sweets of domestic happiness, wealth, position, influence and what is coveted by men more than anything else—friendship with the great and the powerful; in short, everything that makes for abstinence from the sufferings and privations involved in the great enterprise initiated by Mahatmaji. Yet in a moment he changed his life completely and spurning all ease and pleasures that could be purchased by his wealth and the power and influence that lay at his feet he plunged into the thick of the fight like the humblest worker. Who can say our nation has not risen in stature?”

Again in *Young India* of 19th July 1923 (p. 237), he wrote:

“I have not seen any father love his children more than Jamnalalji. I have rarely met men so fond of children whether they be his own or



Govind Vallabh Pant, Rajagopalachari, Jinnah and Jawaharlal



Jamnalal Bajaj

other people's. It may be that this element of his character it was that impelled him to undertake suffering and imprisonment so readily. When I saw Jamnalalji inside the walls of Nagpur jail the other day, I found him more happy and cheerful than at any time before when he was in our miserable company. There was a beautiful smile and a satisfaction in his face which I had not seen before and which I truly envied."

These typical appreciations were only some indication of the great name he made as a national leader, who had sacrificed everything, and as a victorious general of this Flag Satyagraha.

CHAPTER V A DEDICATED LIFE

It has already been stated that Jamnalal was as anxious for the liberation of his soul as for the freedom of his country and that he regarded participation in the movement for freedom under Gandhiji's guidance as part of his spiritual endeavour. At the young age of 28, the Government made him a Rai Bahadur. In a letter written to his wife on January 6, 1917 he said, "I am getting a number of congratulatory letters and telegrams because I am made a Rai Bahadur. This is all empty show, but if God so wills, even this could be made use of for service of the people. It is necessary to pray always to God to grant good sense and strength to render selfless service."

A private letter, written to so intimate a person as his wife, must be regarded as the most valid testimony to get at the core of anybody's heart. So what

Jamnalal wrote has to be regarded as what was lying in the innermost recesses of his heart and telling the whole secret of his life.

In the same letter he wrote:

“Life is like a dream. There is no real happiness in it. The happiness is only imaginary. By contemplating on these thoughts one gets complete peace of mind, and the only thought which persists will be that this life is transitory and unreal. Therefore, our main duty during this lifetime is to try to do whatever service we can with selfless devotion. I hope you too will keep this ideal before you. You will surely attain peace by constantly working for the achievement of this ideal.”

Thus not only did he adopt this pattern himself, but he also asked his wife to do likewise, and the loyal wife has been implicitly following his advice to this day. The noble lady is frequently one of the pilgrims in Vinoba's Bhoodan tours on foot and is at present engaged in Koopadan, i.e. securing donations of wells for the villages to supplement Vinoba's Bhoodan campaign. In recognition of her selfless services, the President of India has conferred on her the title of Padma Vibhushana.

In September 1922, Jamnalal wrote a letter to his wife in which he gave expression to his expectations about his family. He said:

“For years, I have wished that you and our children should not get position and prestige merely because of me but should earn them as a consequence of your own work and service. It will be good for you, for me and for us all. It appears that this wish will soon be fulfilled, thanks

to God's grace and Bapu's blessings. I am now feeling confident that all of us, to a greater or smaller extent, will take to the service of others. That is the only fount of real happiness."

Jamnalal's satisfaction with the dutiful members of his family was genuine. He would never have been happy at merely amassing wealth. In his view the service that his family could render would be real wealth. In 1930, he was enjoying the reward of his patriotic services in Nasik jail. What he wrote from there to his wife on June 21, 1930, when she was also placed under arrest is illustrative of his attitude:

"I was glad to learn that you were arrested. You are ready for any eventuality. So you will know what it is to live in jail and also get peace. It is only because God's full grace and Bapu's blessings are bestowed on us that such good sense has come to us to serve and sacrifice, that is, we have got an opportunity to get rid of our weakness. I am happy at your bravery and grit. . . . I am fully satisfied and proud of you and our whole family."

Continuing, Jamnalal said in the same letter:

"I desire that in this holy crusade, all of us, or at any rate one of us who is the dearest, should get an opportunity to be sacrificed. That would make us most happy. One has to die some day. Then what could be more desirable than to die in order to enhance the glory of one's family, community and country? Now, courting jail has no more attraction for me. What I want is a death like this. . . . It appears as though we have still to play many roles and figure in many scenes. The future is very very bright and clear."

On August 30, 1933 he again wrote to his wife:

"You should stay wherever Bapu orders you. I know that plague is raging there. By continuing to stay there at Bapu's behest if by God's will you become a prey to the plague, I shall feel too happy as if you will get Bapu's blessings and at the same time go to heaven."

When Gandhiji was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and was confined in Yeravda jail in 1922, most of his followers did not know what to do during his absence. Under such difficult circumstances Jamnalal showed great foresight in giving a lead. It is at once indicative of the love he had for the cause and the devotion towards his master. He was anxious to gather together all those who had faith in Gandhiji, his idealism and his methods of work, and to that end he founded an association called the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1923.

To begin with, it was composed of only three members of the Congress Working Committee. Jamnalal had decided that it would be an organization of only those who firmly believed in truth and non-violence as their ideal and pledged themselves to carry on constructive activity as prescribed by Gandhiji. Jamnalal was made the President of the Sangh and remained so till he resigned the presidency in 1934. Some years later, he resigned even its ordinary membership, because he constantly kept on asking himself whether he was fit to be its constituent under the strict rules laid down and he came to the conclusion that he was not.

Kishorlal Mashruwala, who later became editor of *Harijan*, succeeded him as President of the Sangh. In a letter written to Jamnalal, Mashruwala wrote

to him that he did not seem to have fully considered the consequences his resignation would have on the working of the Sangh. But that did not affect him. His resolve had been made according to the dictates of his conscience, and he communicated the same to Mashruwala. Requesting Jamnalal again to reconsider his decision Mashruwala wrote in a humorous vein:

“From your childhood you are accustomed to abandon those who love you most. Bachhrajji adopted you in his family but you threatened to leave him. Bapu conceded your request and adopted you as his fifth son. Now you say that you cannot remain as his son. But, how can you flee like this? Tomorrow you may even threaten to forsake Janakidevi! But is that possible? Once a marriage, always a marriage and once an adoption, always an adoption—that is the inexorable law of Hinduism. Similarly, there is no breaking asunder the relationship of master and disciple. To give up the Gandhi Seva Sangh and to give up Bapu are identical as far as you are concerned. This is not possible in this life; in other words, it will not behove you. There is no going back now.... It is up to you now to give up all worries and become a fakir and decide to join as a service member of the Sangh and make a declaration to that effect to Gandhiji, Kamalnayan and Janakidevi. You will see what enthusiasm this decision will bring you!”

Jamnalal was in internment at Jaipur when he received this letter. Replying to it on July 4, 1939, he wrote:

“I have received your affectionate letter. I shall remain ever grateful to you for your true

affection. I am unable to put on paper my feelings towards you. You have, no doubt, given me advice of a very high order in a jocular vein, but what shall I do? I have no confidence, no control over my mind.... Today I have lost all my self-confidence. The more I see my shortcomings, the more clearly my mind tells me that I am unfit for a high and sacred institution like the Gandhi Seva Sangh. For once kindly relieve me. Bapuji will surely support my stand. He knows my state of mind.

“Because I was somewhat aware of my shortcomings, I did not adopt Bapu as my ‘Guru’ nor treat him as such, but I have certainly treated him as my ‘father’. That too in the hope that my shortcomings may, perhaps, be removed. For some time I was feeling that they were vanishing, but in truth they were not. During the last two years I have been feeling harassed, restless and devoid of enthusiasm. Among Gandhiji’s sons there is also Harilal. But the poor man has become notorious, while persons like me remained hidden from the public eye.... You forget that the other four sons of Gandhiji are also not in the Gandhi Seva Sangh. What special merit have I that I could continue to be a member?... At first, out of pride, I had thought that I had understood something about Bapu and his principles. But on deep consideration I see clearly that I had not understood anything, nor have I the capacity to understand.... Association with people like you has taught me not to fear death. Indeed, sometimes I feel enthusiastic to welcome death.... Please do not

worry on my account. I feel that in my present condition I shall not get more peace of mind anywhere else, and by God's grace I have got this opportunity [to be in jail]."

Earlier, in 1933, Jamnalal had once submitted his resignation from the membership of the Congress Working Committee. Even at that time he had expressed similar sentiments in his letter of resignation dated October 16, 1933 addressed to Jawaharlal Nehru:

"Of late, the fact that I am not still in gaol has very much oppressed me. I believe that, except for utter incapacitation, a person, who like me, has full faith in civil resistance and the Congress programme, may not hold a responsible post if he avoids imprisonment, as I have done, for the purpose merely of improving his health. I feel that I still need some more time to recuperate myself, physically and mentally. This does not become me as treasurer and member of the Working Committee. I must, therefore, tender my resignation of both the offices, as I do hereby. But, if it is not possible just now to appoint another treasurer, I would retain that responsibility, without being a member of the Working Committee. Of course, I need hardly say that this resignation does not absolve me from the duty of carrying out the Congress programme to the best of my ability. It, however, does remove an oppressive burden from my mind."

Jamnalal was never fond of power. He took to politics only as a means of liberating his soul. Gandhiji himself has explained this clearly in one of his writings.

“What is called politics is neither my love nor Jamnalal’s. He entered politics because I was in it. But my real politics is the pursuit of the constructive programme. His politics is also the same. He always conducted himself as a trustee of his wealth. If he did not reach perfection in that capacity, I am responsible for it. I dissuaded him from giving up his all, because I am always careful to see that nobody acts in such matters in a fit of enthusiasm or under the influence of a fleeting passion and repents at leisure and regrets his action. But I can say for certain that Jamnalal did not earn a single pie immorally and whatever he earned he spent away in the cause of public welfare.”

What better certificate can a disciple have from a master like Gandhiji? Whenever Gandhiji had occasion to speak or write about Jamnalal, he used to make it clear that Jamnalal had an independent and intrepid mind, and all that he had done was to give him a little guidance and encouragement off and on. Speaking in 1936 before the students of the Marwadi Vidyalaya in Bombay Gandhiji said:

“Jamnalalji is a man of the people. He is a capable ‘fisher of men’ and has the knack of gathering people around him and inspiring them with his idealism. He has long ago broken the bonds of sect and community and creed, and though the institution owes its existence to donations from Marwadis only, Jamnalalji would not be satisfied until it was thrown open to boys of all castes and creeds...as much to the Harijans as to any section of Hindus, as much to the Musalmans as to the Hindus. He has no room in his

heart for untouchability, and he has none at all any feeling that Hinduism is in any way superior to any other religion. He has helped Muslim institutions with the same generous feeling with which he has helped Hindu institutions. He has several Muslim friends whom he treats as blood-brothers. I would ask you students, Hindus and Muslims, to take a leaf from Jamnalalji's book and to have the same regard for one another's religion that Jamnalalji has, and to treat one another as blood-brothers."

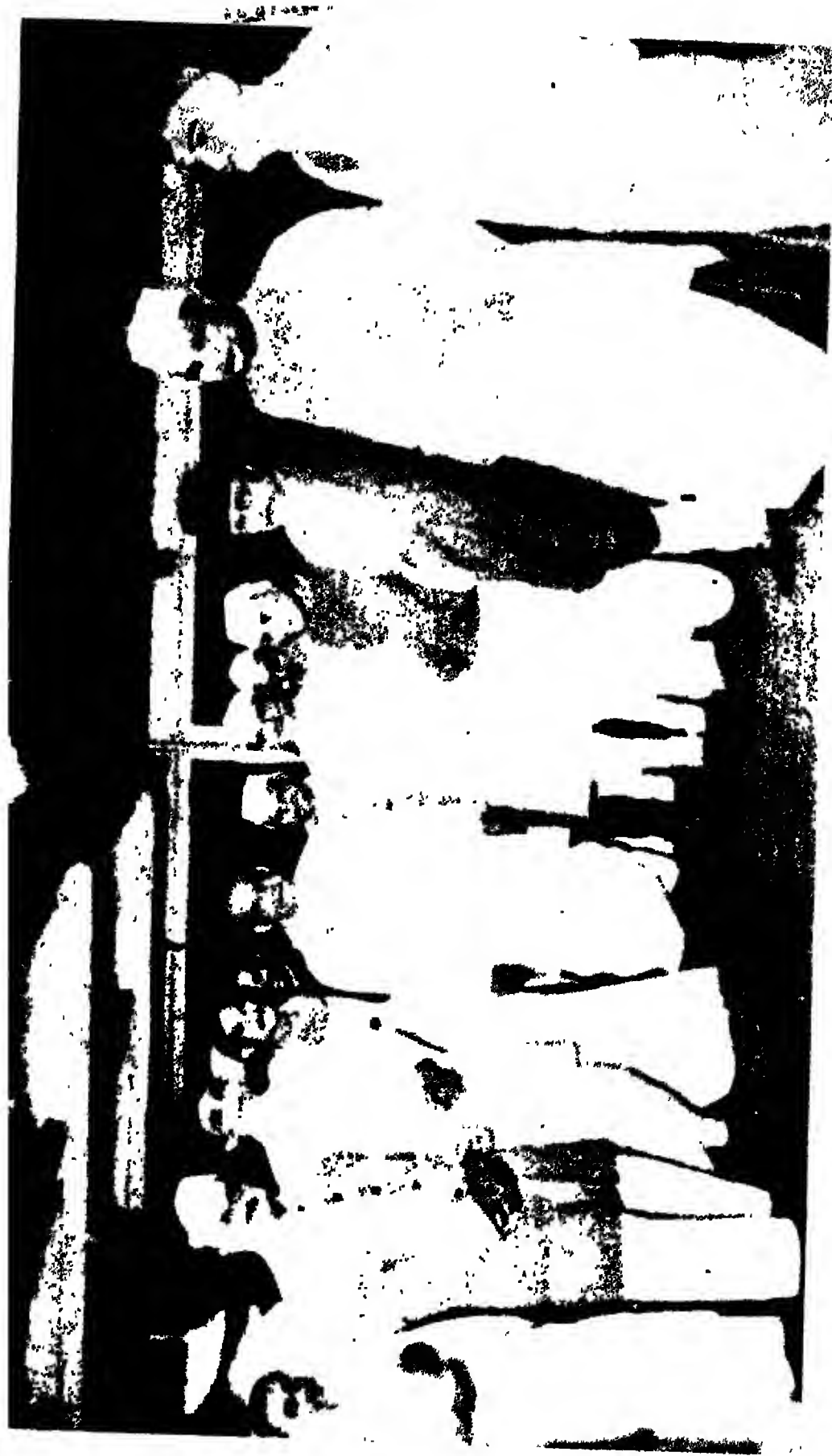
Proceeding further, Gandhiji said:

"Let me tell you one thing which you may not know, and perhaps many do not know. This passion for removal of untouchability and freedom from communal feeling, as well as equal regard for all religions, Jamnalalji does not at all owe to me. It is not possible for any one to transfer one's conviction to another. All one can do is to help another to manifest that conviction which is already in him. But in respect of Jamnalalji, I could not take the credit for having even helped him to arrive at or to manifest those convictions in his life. He had the convictions in him long before he met me and he had lived up to them. It was these inner convictions of his that brought him and me together and made possible the close co-operation in which we have been able to work together for so many years. You children have to be worthy of a man like him."

Sometimes Jamnalal's judgment on a particular problem or state of affairs differed from that of Gandhiji, but he did not hesitate to express himself freely and fearlessly. One such occasion arose in

1924 when Gandhiji made up his mind to allow the Swarajists to contest elections to the Legislative Councils under the Congress auspices and to allow them to work as a wing of the Congress. He strongly opposed Gandhiji's move. On another occasion when Gandhiji proposed suspension of Satyagraha at one of the meetings of the A.I.C.C., Jamnalal was the Acting President of the Congress and he felt that Gandhiji was taking a wrong step. He told Gandhiji, "I am very unhappy to find that my opinion differs from yours. I have always surrendered my judgment before yours, but this time I find myself helpless. I cannot support the proposition." Gandhiji agreed that under the circumstances this would be the right course for him to follow. Jamnalal had great respect for Gandhiji's judgment. He also felt that Gandhiji alone was the master of the science of Satyagraha. All the same he was not prepared to go against his own conscience. So he remained neutral when the voting stage came but advised others that, if they had no conscientious objection, they must accept Gandhiji's advice and vote in favour of the resolution.

There was one occasion when Jamnalal's loyalty was put to an even more severe test. It arose in 1937. Jamnalal did not agree with Gandhiji's view that the parliamentary mentality had come to stay and he did not approve of Gandhiji's step to allow the Congress to contest elections to the Legislative Councils under the Government of India Act of 1935. But like a true disciplinarian he submitted to the Congress decision. The Congress later decided to accept office, when it was agreed between the Congress and the British Government that there would be unfettered provincial autonomy, and the Governors of the



Some of the prominent persons in this group are Jairamdas Daulatram, Kripalani, Vallabhbhai, Bhulabhai Desai, Jawaharlal, Abul Kalam Azad and Jamnalal



Subhas Chandra Bose received on arrival at Haripura Congress. Others in the picture are
Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabbhbhai Patel, Kripalani and Jannalal Bajaj

provinces would work as constitutional heads. Accordingly, the Congress formed ministries in eight provinces.

The ministers had to take the oath of loyalty to the King-Emperor. Jamnalal raised the question: How can those who have pledged themselves to complete independence take such an oath? He discussed the question with Gandhiji and perhaps was never wholly satisfied.

Gandhiji said that while theoretically it may not be hundred per cent correct to take such an oath, there is nothing immoral in it. In an imperfect world, *practice has to be different to that extent from strict principle*. This is how Gandhiji like a practical person tided over difficult situations when he was satisfied that the principle was not being really sacrificed for mere expediency.

The Congress Working Committee informally decided in 1938 that Jamnalal should be elected President of the Haripura session of the Congress. This decision also had Gandhiji's approval. But Jamnalal himself told Gandhiji that Subhas Chandra Bose who had then returned from Europe should be given this honour. Jamnalal thus easily relinquished an honour which in those days was the highest mark of recognition which the nation bestowed on a patriot for his service and sacrifice in the cause of the country, no less than for his stature as a national leader.

Jamnalal's natural inclination was towards constructive work and not militant politics. Khadi, Hindi propagation and removal of untouchability were particularly nearest to his heart. When he made his second will in 1925 he laid emphasis on these three aspects. He also indicated preference for Khadi in

this will. Khadi, in his opinion, was the perfect form of Swadeshi. In his household that was the only cloth used. At the Coconada session of the Congress in 1923, the All-India Khaddar Board was set up and Jamnalal was appointed its Chairman. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of popularizing Khadi throughout the country.

In Gandhiji's own words: "Jamnalalji gave as much time as, if not more than I to Khadi. I may have given the *mantra*, but Jamnalalji devoted his intelligence, his powers of organization, and his money to give form to the scheme. He had the gift of seeking out and creating workers too. He felt, with me that Swaraj was to be found in Khadi, and he organized it while I was in jail, or else it might have died."

Jamnalalji toured several princely States of Rajasthan to propagate Khadi, which was looked upon with disfavour by the Indian Princes and their Dewans, because they thought that it was a symbol of anti-British feeling and sedition. But Jamnalal patiently carried on his work trying to convert them in favour of Khadi, and succeeded greatly in enlisting their support.

When the All-India Spinners' Association was formed in 1925, Jamnalal became its treasurer. The burden of directing its affairs fell mainly on Jamnalal. Writing about this Gandhiji has said, "It was an easy thing for me to rely on him to carry out my wishes, for no one had identified himself quite so much with every one of my activities as he. And our work went on smoothly."

The following words are a measure of Jamnalal's devotion to Khadi work:

“I consider it as the religion of the present age. I hold that if even a Brahmana does not perform his daily morning and evening prayers, God will forgive him. But if he does not work on the Charkha at least for a few minutes every day, he shall not be forgiven. Similarly if a Bania abstains from going to Thakurji's temple for a few days he will not be regarded as a defaulter in Thakurji's *darbar*, but if he does not ply the Charkha he will be regarded as an offender. The day I realized that mill-cloth deprives the poor of their food and work, I began to believe that using Khaddar was meritorious and using mill-cloth was sinful.”

Again in his address to an Agarwal Mahasabha session he said, “I wish to tell you from my own experience that Khadi is a great teacher influencing our character. It is a providential blessing for removal of the country's poverty and is the general of the country's march towards Swaraj. I have not the least doubt that Khadi alone will liberate India.”

Jamnalal drew the attention of the members of his community to a number of other questions in his speech. He said that as tradesmen they had remained utterly selfish and worshipped Mammon. That had made them timid and devoid of self-respect. He advised them to discontinue trade in foreign cloth. He advocated cow-protection, reform of women's life in society, and giving up of obsolete marriage customs, inter-marriage among sub-castes, removal of untouchability and eradication of unemployment. He expressed great anxiety for the improvement of Indian society in general and the Marwadi community in particular.

Jamnalal was a lover of Hindi even much before he came in contact with Gandhiji. But under Gandhiji's inspiration he put his heart and soul into the propagation of Hindi. He went on a number of tours in Southern India in that connection. A Hindi conference held in Cochin in 1929 passed a special resolution of thanks to him for his services. He was elected President of the All-India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held in Madras in 1937. In his presidential speech he explained the importance of Hindi very cogently and feelingly:

“I am fully alive to the importance of literature and education in the scheme of promoting national weal. I am, therefore, ever interested in establishing friendly contacts with literary men and educationists....Literature is not my field....But from a very young age I have been feeling the urgent necessity of having a common national language for India. Especially, when I was present at the historic Calcutta Congress session held in 1906 under Dadabhai Naoroji's presidentship and the entire proceedings were conducted through the medium of the English language, I was able to understand very little of it. At that time I felt that it was a matter of sorrow and anxiety that being Indians in our own country we have to conduct our affairs in a foreign language. On several other occasions similar thoughts came to my mind. By conducting our political work through the medium of English, the masses do not get any political education, nor any inspiration. It was my heart-felt desire that even a half-read person like me should be able to understand our country's problems and

serve the country in at least some little measure. That is why I was eager and enthusiastic to see the propagation of Hindi-Hindustani.

“It was a few people like Lokamanya Tilak, Pandit Malaviya, Lala Lajpatrai and Gandhiji who wrote and spoke about what was happening in the political field in the languages of the people and awakened them and increased their strength. Their work was akin to what our poet-saints had done in the field of religion to open the doors of salvation to the masses by bringing to them the secrets of the ancient religious texts in their own languages. By seeing this my faith and love towards the national language increased....

“During my 30 years of humble service to the country, I have firmly come to the conclusion that unless we have one national language, we cannot have national solidarity.... Hindi is the language which will serve as the symbol of truth, love, liberty and national unity.”

Speaking about life and literature, Jamnalal said,

“Our literature is a reflection of our life; it is a mirror in which we see the image of life. Life is constantly changing but literature lives for ever. My aspiration is that the greatness of our literary men should be recognized all over the globe.”

Jamnalal then proceeded to make certain concrete and practical suggestions for the promotion and popularization of Hindi: (1) Hindi and Urdu should be unified. (2) Even while accepting that the Devanagari script is a scientifically developed script, Hindi scholars should learn the Arabic script even as Urdu

scholars should learn Devanagari. (3) The study of Hindustani should be made compulsory through legislation. (4) Although the use of English for conducting the work of the Legislative Assemblies has been made more or less compulsory by Government orders, the representatives of the people should try their best to conduct such proceedings in the provincial languages or Hindustani. Sign-boards, advertisements, handbills, etc. should be made in Hindustani and not English. (5) In assemblages like the Congress and at public meetings, as far as possible no Indian should be allowed to speak in English. None should hear such a speech. The speaker may speak in his mother tongue and the speech then translated into the provincial language. (6) Merchants and traders should maintain their correspondence and accounts in Hindi. (7) Classes for Hindi shorthand and typewriting should be started, and prizes offered.

The suggestions show his foresight as well as practical approach to the problem. It is not the fault of pioneers like him that even after eleven years since the establishment of Swaraj, Jamnalal's dream still remains unfulfilled.

Jamnalal was not merely 'satisfied with making a speech in this strain. He had already toured the Madras province in the company of Shri Rajagopalachari to collect funds for Hindi propaganda and appointed a number of Hindi Prachar workers at his own expense. He secured a sum of Rs. 50,000 from the Agarwal Mahasabha for the same purpose. The Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, which has been teaching Hindi to lakhs of people in the South these more than thirty-five years, owes not a little to his initiative, inspiration, guidance and help.

The Reception Committee of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Indore, over which Gandhiji was to preside, had resolved at the suggestion of Jamnalal to hand over one lakh of rupees to Gandhiji for Hindi propaganda. A sum of Rs. 60,000 was collected and the date of the Sammelan was drawing near. If the whole sum was not collected Gandhiji would not come. Without bothering too much, Jamnalal gave a donation of Rs. 40,000 quietly and made up the amount.

He induced Gandhiji to start a Hindi edition of the *Navajivan* and took up its financial responsibility. He spent large sums for the *Rajasthan-Kesari* and also helped Hindi journals like the *Karmaveer* and *Pratap*. He started the Gandhi Hindi Pustak Bhandar in Bombay. He was largely instrumental in starting the Sasta Sahitya Mandal for the purpose of making available to the public good books in Hindi, and more especially Gandhian literature, at a cheap price. He was able to persuade a number of prominent people to associate themselves with this venture. First started at Ajmer, the Mandal later shifted to Delhi and is now a leading organization among Hindi publishing houses in the country. The Hindi monthly *Tyagabhum*i was started under the auspices of the Mandal.

Equally great was his interest in the removal of untouchability, which to him was a humanitarian cause and not merely a social reform. Even before Gandhiji took up the cause of the Harijans, Jamnalal had given a good deal of thought to the problem and felt strongly about the injustice meted out to a large section of the people in the name of religion. When Gandhiji took up the cause, Jamnalalji became his chief collaborator in this as in other fields of work.

He used to go for *darshan* regularly and punctually to the Lakshminarayan Mandir at Wardha which his grand-father had built. He maintained it in the right Vaishnava style as before. But when the question of temple-entry for the untouchables was mooted, Jamnalal thought that the movement must start with himself, and was the first person in the whole country to throw open the temple to them at the hands of Vinobaji in 1928. Similarly, he publicly ate food that was cooked by Harijans at the Bhagvadbhakti Ashram at Rewari. He spent large sums of money for giving scholarships to Harijan boys. He took a great deal of trouble to throw open public wells to Harijans. He wanted to make a beginning with a well in his own Dharmashala. But this was not easy, because he was only one of the trustees of that property and the other trustees held orthodox views and were opposed to his plan. He did his utmost by way of argument, appeal and friendly pressure, and at last succeeded in persuading them. It was in 1927 that the well in the Bachhraj Dharmashala compound at Wardha was thrown open to all. Jamnalal did the same thing with regard to all wells in his fields and gardens.

Before the Lakshminarayan temple was thrown open to all, there was a great deal of commotion in Wardha. A deputation of about 200 local *Sanatanis* (orthodox people) went to see him and dissuade him from his plan. They pleaded that religion was endangered by his proposed action. He told them that he completely disagreed with them and on the contrary thought that he would be serving the cause of religion better by his action. He was then requested to wait for a few years. Jamnalal agreed to wait on one condition: *en masse* they should become Khadi wearers, for,

that at least would not endanger their religion. But they said that while they agreed with him in principle they could not give him any such assurance. Jamnalal then suggested to them that another temple, to be kept open to one and all, should be erected in Wardha, for which half of the expenses should be borne by the deputationists and he would bear half. They would not agree to that also.

The next day they held a big meeting and passed a resolution opposing the throwing open of the Lakshminarayan temple to Harijans. It was also decided to obstruct physically any such entry.

At 6 a.m. the next day, Jamnalal made his appearance in Gandhi Chowk near the temple with a number of his friends. Many of the crowd that had gathered there were Congressmen. The *Sanatanis* were about 50 yards away. A police officer on duty asked Jamnalal if he needed police protection. He smiled and said he did not expect any trouble, much less a riot, and in any case there was no need of any police help. At 8 o'clock, Vinobaji declared the temple open to the Harijans. A band of Harijans entered it to the accompaniment of devotional singing. There was rejoicing everywhere. More *bhajan* parties came and everybody felt that a new age of love and equality had been inaugurated.

The *Sanatanis* apparently did nothing, but secretly they were trying to disrupt the move by the policy of "divide and rule". They sent some sweepers, men and women, to the temple thinking that the Mahars and other untouchables would object to it because even the various Harijan communities observed untouchability as among themselves. But nothing of the

kind happened. Till 12 noon, no less than 4,000 Harijans went to the temple and had *darshan* of Lakshminarayan for the first time. Jamnalal was there to welcome all. He was floating in a sublime atmosphere. The *Sanatanis* now thought of boycotting Jamnalal. The priest of the temple, another person who held discourses on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* for the devotee, and some other servants were forced to embark on non-co-operation. But they were substituted by other suitable men and the daily worship went on as usual. A Harijan was added to the list of the trustees of the temple. Jamnalal employed Harijan servants in his own house and also began to take food at their hands.

Later the Congress appointed an Untouchability Removal Committee, of which Jamnalal was elected Chairman. He put his heart and soul into the work. He addressed a memorable circular letter to the trustees of all public Hindu temples appealing to them to throw open the temples to one and all. He went on an extensive all-India tour in connection with this work. He contacted the Municipal authorities everywhere he went and tried to persuade them to throw open to Harijans the schools, tanks, dispensaries, tea shops and eating houses over which they had jurisdiction. He induced the trustees of the famous Dattatreya temple at Ellichpur to permit Harijans to enter it. It was thrown open to them at his hands. Speaking on that occasion he said, "It is ridiculing the concept of God Himself to call Him as one who purifies the sinful and yet believe that He will be polluted by the contact of Harijans. Parents love their children equally. Indeed the invalid, unintelligent or disabled among them receive more attention. If

God is the father of us all, does this not apply to Him? To regard a human being as even inferior to dumb animals cannot in any sense be religious. It is sinful."

Jamnalal's activities in favour of the removal of untouchability were very much disliked by the *Santanis*. Some leading Brahmanas, Agarwals and Maheshwaris of Wardha held a meeting at the Balaji temple and resolved to ostracize him. He was, however, prepared for it. Shrikrishnadas Jaju, a leading member of the community, was asked by some one whether he would remain with Jamnalal or join the boycotters. Jajuji, who was like a brother of Jamnalal, quietly said, "I do not see anything wrong in what Jamnalalji is doing and so I shall not only remain with him but even co-operate in his work." So Jajuji was also boycotted. But they were themselves not sure that the boycott would be strictly enforced. The notice of ex-communication which he received in this behalf, therefore, makes rather queer reading. In the course of the letter addressed to him they said that even if he received an invitation from any of them to attend any auspicious ceremony he should ignore it. Similarly, if he invited any of them on such occasions they would not be present,* and he should not mind such conduct on their part! This only shows the respect in which they held Jamnalal and his close associates.

When the Marwadi Vidyalyaya of Bombay was thrown open to Harijans, Jamnalal was similarly subjected to communal fury but he was prepared for such eventualities.

During the course of his campaign for removal of untouchability his car was pelted with stones in some places. In other places Brahmanas and others officiating in various temples lay prostrate before his

car. But Jamnalal remained firm like a rock and pursued his course. Determination, daring and dash—these were the three qualities that he showed eminently in this campaign. On his activities of those days, Gandhiji wrote in the *Young India* of December 13, 1928: “Jamnalalji has chosen a wider field of service. We cannot exclusively identify him with any particular community. The world is his family, and he can serve his community only through the service of humanity.”

CHAPTER VI

DEFENDER OF STATES' PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Jamnalal hailed from Rajasthan and was a subject of a Princely State, belonging as he did to a village in Sikar State. He knew well the atmosphere in the Princely States in those days and the way in which their people lived. The cause of States' people's freedom was, therefore, dear to his heart. He began to take active interest in the activities of the All-India States' People's Conference, and the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal.

The Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal had been founded in 1931 but it began to function actively only from 1936 with the inspiration and support of Jamnalal. He had gone to Jaipur in that year for a celebration under the auspices of an institution called Jeevana Kutira, and the leaders of Jaipur who had gathered together on that occasion had elected him as their chief. Under his leadership the Praja Mandal started to organize the people.

On March 30, 1938, the Jaipur Durbar issued an order against starting public bodies and associations

without permission from the Government. It was an assault on a common civil liberty. Yet, the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal made an application for its name being registered as a public body, as an assurance had been previously given that recognition would be granted to it in case it applied for registration. The annual session of the Mandal was convened under Jamnalal's presidentship on May 8 and 9, 1938. A good deal of enthusiasm was generated in the people both for political and social work.

Sikar was a small principality under Jaipur and the Raoraja of Sikar had several conflicts with the Maharaja of Jaipur on various matters. In 1938, the clash came to a head on an apparently minor point, whether the Sikar prince Hardayal Singh should be sent for education to England or not. The dispute took such an extraordinary turn that the State and the principality were nearly engaged in an armed conflict. On July 4, 1938, the Jaipur police fired at a train and a few Rajputs were killed and many were wounded. Among them were some children. The Rajputs and Jats in Sikar were greatly agitated and a terrific fight seemed to be imminent. Jamnalal who had been keeping himself in touch with the developments felt that he must intervene to avert such a calamity.

He addressed a number of meetings and pointed out to the people of Sikar the futility of any violent action, which would be put down by resort to repressive measures while the fire of hatred would remain smouldering for ever. He counselled instead peaceful resistance. In a public statement he issued on May 13, 1938, he said:

“If the citizens of Sikar co-operate with me, I shall certainly get the maximum success in my efforts. There is no need to think that they will be running any risk by doing so. If at all there is any risk of betrayal by the State authorities, it is myself and the Praja Mandal that will be taking it. If there is any such betrayal, the Praja Mandal and myself shall hold ourselves responsible to the people of Sikar to give a fitting reply on their behalf, and I and my co-workers will indeed consider it a great privilege if we have to suffer the greatest hardships on that account. In such an eventuality I shall advise the people to start a non-violent Satyagraha campaign, and I shall register my own name as the first volunteer in the campaign. This is my solemn assurance.”

The people of Sikar were greatly impressed by this forthright and sincere declaration. They kept peaceful and Jamnalal could successfully negotiate a settlement with the Jaipur Durbar and avoid a crisis for the time being.

Sir Beauhamp St. John, an Englishman, was Dewan of Jaipur at the time and he considered it a great loss of prestige for the Jaipur Durbar that the Jaipur people were passing under the influence of a Gandhian. He was not at all happy at having had to negotiate a settlement with Jamnalal in the Sikar dispute, and felt that the prestige of the Jaipur Durbar must be restored by having a show-down with the Praja Mandal and Jamnalal.

On December 30, 1938, the Executive Committee of the Praja Mandal was to meet at Jaipur to consider measures for famine relief in the area. Jamnalal was

on his way to attend this meeting. He had detrained at Sawai Madhopur, and was waiting on the platform for a train to Jaipur on December 29, when all of a sudden, Mr. F. S. Young, the Inspector-General of Police, Jaipur, served on him an order prohibiting his entry into the limits of Jaipur State as his "presence and activities within the State were likely to lead to a breach of the peace." Although Jamnalal had anticipated the possibility of such an order being served on him and discussed the matter with Gandhiji beforehand, the wording of the order came as a surprise to him. He asked the Police Officer, "When did I become such a dangerous person as to cause a breach of peace? I am a citizen of Jaipur, born and bred here, while the Dewan of Jaipur is a foreigner. He has no right to refuse me entry. I cannot tolerate this and I shall have to break the order." He was moved with resentment and anguish at the unjust order.

The poor Mr. Young was perplexed. He attempted to reason with Jamnalal by saying that he himself did not believe that it was a proper order, and he would get in touch with his superiors and try to get it rescinded. Jamnalal did not have much faith in Young's assurances. He believed that the order was a deliberate move to provoke a conflict and that it was a challenge to the Praja Mandal for a trial of strength. Yet, as advised by Gandhiji, he did not wish to precipitate a conflict immediately by disobeying the order. He told one of his co-workers present there that he foresaw a grim struggle ahead with the authorities, but it would be advisable to consult Gandhiji before taking any step on their part. He asked the friend to explain the position to the members of the Praja Mandal Executive who were waiting for him in

Jaipur. He then proceeded to Delhi to meet Gandhiji for consultations.

P. L. Chudgar, a barrister from Rajkot, who went to see Sir Beauhamp St. John in connection with the Sikar affairs had occasion to discuss the Jaipur situation also with him. Chudgar told him that Jamnalal was well known to be a man of peace and his mission in going to Jaipur was to help his brethren who were in the grip of scarcity and famine. But the British Dewan, while agreeing that Jamnalal was a man of peace, said that he was determined to see that on no account did Jamnalal and his men come near the masses in the famine-stricken areas for obvious political reasons. The ban on Jamnalal's entry into Jaipur would, therefore, stand and he was ready to face all the consequences that might follow a breach of the order by Jamnalal. He further said that the Congressmen were out for a revolution by means of a non-violent struggle. But non-violence was a force as powerful or perhaps more powerful than violence. Indians were playing upon the humane instincts in the English race, but if there was Japan or Herr Hitler instead of the English in India, Indians would not have succeeded so well with non-violence. He then said that it was his considered opinion that non-violence, however strict, must be met by violence and his reply to the non-violent movement in Jaipur would be the 'machine-gun'.

Chudgar wrote to Jamnalal of what had transpired at his interview with the Prime Minister, and Jamnalal in turn sent the letter to Gandhiji for his attention. Gandhiji's first thought was to publish the letter, but looking to the seriousness of the Dewan's attitude he felt that it would be better if he invited

his opinion on the letter before publishing it. But the Dewan did not have the courage to acknowledge that he had spoken in these terms, and so while he denied that it was a true account of his interview with Chudgar, he was not prepared to give his version of it. Gandhiji then published the whole correspondence relating to this episode in the *Harijan* of February 11, 1939, commenting thereon that in the circumstances he could not but believe Chudgar's version of the interview to be correct. He also appealed to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to look into the matter but the Viceroy was not disposed to do so against the British Dewan.

Meantime, some leaders of the Praja Mandal met at Bardoli on January 5, 1939. They all came to the conclusion that a fight with the Jaipur authorities had become inevitable and resolved to start the struggle under the leadership of Jamnalal. They met Gandhiji and took his counsel. He agreed with their plan and gave his blessings, and asked them to take advice from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the matter.

The Jaipur leaders then called on the Sardar and told him that they had come to seek Gandhiji's counsel with regard to starting Satyagraha.... Before they could proceed further the Sardar cut them short and bluntly asked them whether they were really serious to start Satyagraha or were trying to seek shelter behind Gandhiji in the hope that he might refuse permission. He told them that when he was determined to do something he never asked Bapu about it. He simply did it. They replied that they had already made a firm resolve to start Satyagraha and had obtained Gandhiji's blessings for it. They had come to the Sardar to seek his advice on a plan of campaign.

That satisfied him. He then discussed the strategy with them like a commander discussing with his lieutenants.

On January 12, the Jaipur Darbar issued a proclamation withdrawing the recognition given to the Praja Mandal as a public body. It was obvious, therefore, that the Mandal could not lawfully carry on its work. This was a direct assault on the civil liberty of the people, and the Praja Mandal decided to vindicate the people's rights by offering Satyagraha. On February 1, 1939, Jamnalal Bajaj inaugurated the movement by defying the order of no-entry in Jaipur State that had been served on him.

As soon as Jamnalal entered the Jaipur State limits he was placed under arrest, but instead of detaining him in prison the Police Officers took him outside the State boundary and released him. Jamnalal once again entered the State. He was again arrested and released as before. It seemed to him that the Jaipur authorities did not want to put him in jail. Thereupon, he decided not to take food except carrots till he was imprisoned by them. When he entered the State once again, he resisted being put in the police van to be taken out of the State, and in the pushing and jostling that followed his shirt was torn and he was slightly injured. Nevertheless, he was forcibly removed in a van and released outside the State limits.

At last when he once again entered the State, he was arrested at Bairath town by Thakur Phoolsingh, the Superintendent of Police. Inspector-General Young who was there gave Jamnalal an assurance that this time he would be detained in custody, and not released. Thakur Phoolsingh also told Jamnalal that if he was sent out of the State once more, he would not be a party to this farce and would resign his post.

After his arrest Jamnalal was interned at a hill-fort at Moransagar about 40 miles from Jaipur. He was kept alone at the place, but was allowed to go out for walks. He used to meet the local villagers and try to serve them by attending to their problems.

In those days several parts of Jaipur State were infested by panthers, which used to harass the villagers by carrying away their cattle and sometimes even human beings became prey to them. But the killing of these beasts was banned because they were preserved for the sport of the Princes and their *shikari* friends. The area round about Moransagar was troubled a good deal by the panthers, but the people were helpless. Jamnalal took upon himself to bring the grievance to the notice of the Maharaja. In a letter addressed to the Maharaja, among other things, he said:

“I read the interview you gave to pressmen at Karachi. I do not believe that your present attitude could be of any benefit and satisfaction to your subjects. It is your primary duty to take your people into confidence and remove their grievances. You must make a public declaration that the happiness of your people is your happiness and their misery is your misery and that you are prepared to sacrifice any of your pleasures for the good of your people. If you make such a declaration and act upon it, I am confident there will be real peace and contentment in your State. It is impossible to win the hearts of the people by the use of machine-guns. . . .When I had a heart-to-heart talk with you, you had been kind enough to say that after your return from Europe you would make a full effort to ensure the happiness of your subjects.”

Referring to the immediate grievance of the villagers regarding the panthers, he proceeded to say:

“I was glad to learn that you had killed a violent and dangerous panther, but I was miserable when I heard that even in its death-throes it killed a villager in your very presence. I am sure your heart will melt when you come to know that behind your back your poor subjects are suffering a great deal of harm from these wild beasts. My heart weeps when I see the atrocious nature of the forest regulations. I fail to understand the wisdom of keeping in force such regulations as keep alive the danger of sorrow and death to your subjects every moment, when they are not of any benefit to the State. The least you can do is to follow the British forest laws. If you do that, I am sure, your people will forget the past and love you with all their heart, and bless you.”

There is a clear delineation of Jamnalal's character in this letter. He is humble yet firm, civil but frank. He had nothing to ask for himself. The treatment given to him in jail was far from satisfactory, but he never complained about it. On the contrary, he appreciated the fact that he was treated like any other common prisoner. For instance, he did not like the *mug dal* that was invariably served, but he put up with it. He was used to take ghee with his meals but that was conspicuous by its absence in the jail diet. Such treatment naturally led to loss of weight and strength. One of his feet became sore. He was then removed to the Karanavaton-ka-baug for medical treatment. The disease grew serious. The official

medical advice was that he should go to Europe for treatment.

What could have been more desirable if one wanted to save one's face and prestige and yet pass off as a patriot who had done his duty by the people? He would have been unconditionally released. But Jamnalal was made of quite a different stuff. His reply to the doctors was characteristic: "I was born here and I wish to die here. Medical treatment in Europe is not available to my poor countrymen. I do not, therefore, desire to take advantage of it simply because I can afford it. I shall prefer death here to treatment abroad."

Jamnalal's example proved contagious. No less than 500 people followed him and went to jail. Some of them were women. The reports of these happenings reached the Viceroy. Gandhiji had an interview with him, at which the Jaipur situation was also discussed. The Viceroy agreed to move in the matter. Pressure from the Viceroy on one side and the popular pressure of Satyagraha on the other ultimately led to a settlement between the Jaipur Government and the Praja Mandal.

The terms of the settlement were:

- (1) The name of the people's organization, viz. Praja Mandal, should remain intact. (2) A member of the Praja Mandal could become a member of any political body outside the Jaipur State. (3) There would be complete freedom of speech to educate the people regarding the Praja Mandal's activities. (4) The aim of the Praja Mandal was to establish responsible government in the State under the aegis of the Maharaja.

Obviously, this settlement was a victory for the Satyagraha campaign launched and resolutely carried on by the Praja Mandal. It was a victory for Jamnalal. He was released forthwith. He immediately set to work to spread a network of agencies for constructive activities in the State. Khadi and village industries exhibitions were enthusiastically organized at Jaipur and Ajmer. Following Jamnalal's release, the ban on political meetings was also lifted.

Jamnalal had a number of interviews with the Maharaja and a formula was evolved whereby, though the statutory regulation regarding public bodies remained, it was so modified as not to make it obligatory on any public body to register itself. On September 10, Jamnalal issued a statement in which he clearly explained all this.

From this time onwards, Jamnalal became associated more and more not only with the people's movement for responsible government and democratic rights in Jaipur and other Rajasthani States, but also with the movements that were carried on for similar purposes in the Princely States all over India. He became an acknowledged leader of the Indian States' people who wanted to march hand in hand with their fellow Indians and not lag behind. Even prior to this, he had been championing their cause and had been constantly in correspondence with the authorities in Hyderabad, Bharatpur, Alwar, Dewas, Dholpur, Udaipur and other States with regard to the grievances of their subjects. In the course of this voluminous correspondence one comes across his devotion to Swaraj, Satyagraha and self-respect.

Sir Akbar Hydari was Dewan of Hyderabad in 1938. He adopted conciliatory methods while dealing

with the Congress leaders and other public men and often it seemed that he held quite liberal views. But the Hyderabad atmosphere and influence must have been such as would cramp and stunt any one in a position of authority. Jamnalal had his dealings with Sir Akbar also. After an interview with him at Bombay, Jamnalal addressed him a letter on November 15, 1938 in which he wrote:

“With reference to the proposed Reforms I was glad to learn from you that they excelled in their democratic nature any of those in the other Indian States and that they were quite free from any communal tinge.... May I know if on any occasion the Government have announced the nature of the Reforms to the people of Hyderabad? If so, I will thank you to let me have a copy of the announcement for my reference.

“I expressed to you on this point that in view of such Reforms, the Government should not have adopted repressive measures and banned the formation of a body which is pledged to a policy and programme based on purely non-communal and national principles. My contention was that such an organization would have been of help to the Government, and would have striven to prepare public opinion in favour of the proposed Reforms and co-operated in working them, provided they were such as would accelerate the advance of the people towards responsible government, and would invest them with real power. Unfortunately the Government were prejudiced from the very beginning and thought it necessary to ban the formation of the State Congress on the assumption that its activities

were bound to be communal.... On a perusal of the constitution of the State Congress you will find that it is one of the articles of its faith that no person who is a member of any communal organization can be elected an office-bearer or even as a member of any committee.... No political meeting calculated to bring about political results could be held in the Nizam's Dominions since the year 1929.... The Government's action in banning the very formation of the State Congress gives rise to strong doubts in the minds of the public about the intentions of the Government...."

In conclusion Jamnalal offered his good offices to work a solution which was likely to restore goodwill and amity between the Government and the State Congress.

During his talk with Jamnalal in Bombay Sir Akbar had been very cordial and conciliatory and had even offered to invite him and Sardar Patel to visit Hyderabad. But after returning to Hyderabad wrote a rather equivocal letter to Jamnalal, at the same time virtually withdrawing the invitation by suggesting that "this particular time would be most unsuitable to pay a visit to the State"!

Jamnalal was deeply hurt by this attitude of Sir Akbar. He wrote back to him: "There is a big gap between the warmth of your talk with me at Bombay and the rigid coldness of your reply.... You have even characterized the good office of a friend as interference. It means banging the door in his face."

Jamnalal kept Gandhiji fully informed of the developments and even took his help in revising the

drafts of the letters written to Sir Akbar, which were temperate yet firm.

But Jamnalal was coming to realize that it was no use carrying on this correspondence any further, when evidently they had no common ground to arrive at an agreement. On December, 3 1938, Jamnalal wrote a final letter to Sir Akbar in which he said: "I appreciate deeply your courtesy and patience in allowing me to place frankly before you my doubts and my difficulties in accepting the position of the Government. But an incident has occurred which makes me feel that it is not right for me to trouble you any further to continue the talks we have had."

The incident referred to was described in detail by Jamnalal in his letter. The Hyderabad Government had given wide publicity to the action of a batch of Hyderabad State Congress workers who had been arrested by the Police and had come out of jail after disowning the Congress and tending apologies for having joined it. But actually it turned out that they had been subjected to the worst type of "third degree" while in confinement and the apology had been forcibly extracted from them. Jamnalal completely satisfied himself that the story narrated by these workers was authentic in every detail. Thereafter he felt that it was futile to continue conciliation talks with a Government which was bent on crushing the popular will by stooping to the worst form of repression and untruthful methods.

In conclusion he told Sir Akbar that each of them had a responsibility to do what they conceived to be their duties in their respective positions, and their personal friendly relations should not come in the way of each doing his duty. But they should continue

to have faith in and respect for each others' personal integrity.

The people's movement in Hyderabad continued, following the usual pattern of such struggles in other Indian States. The rulers followed the same old policy of "divide and rule". But they could not withstand the tide of popular discontent for long and had to concede some concessions to pacify the people. Jamnalal continued to take keen interest in the movement. True to his character, he remained on friendly terms with Sir Akbar Hydari personally, till the end. Like his master, Gandhiji, Jamnalal knew that it was the system that was to blame and not the personalities involved who were only instrumental in carrying out the policies laid down. But like his master he had immense faith in the goodness of man, and he always tried to bring out the best in everyone and win him over by his loving approach.

Jamnalal carried on correspondence on similar lines with the Dewan and the Maharaja of Alwar. As a matter of fact, he was in constant touch with the people's movements in many of the Princely States and gave a good deal of his time, energy and funds to their cause. He was largely responsible for strengthening the hands of the people in these States to fight for their elementary rights which were denied to them, and preparing them for the day when they could stand shoulder to shoulder with their compatriots in other parts of the country.

CHAPTER VII

EXEMPLARY BUSINESSMAN

This world of ours has traditionally been described as threefold—*trividha*. *Sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas* are stated to be the three elements which combine in different proportions in the formation of all things including a human being's character. These proportions are so varied that they are not the same or identical in any two living beings. Godly, human and satanic might be regarded as English equivalents of these three Sanskrit words. Since the blending of these three elements is inevitable in the constitution of every individual, the thesis is put forth that the world must always remain very much the same qualitatively—that it has always been so in the past, is about the same at present and will not appreciably be different in future.

If this is an eternal and a universal truth, it means that what is often called Utopia or an ideal state with a perfect political and social system or *Satya Yuga* (the Era of Truth and Righteousness) will never dawn on this earth, because these concepts presuppose that all human beings will be *sattvic* or godly and, therefore, anger, strife, jealousy, malice and hatred will have been exterminated and love will be the only element pervading all. Such an achievement can exist only in poetic or philosophic flights of imagination according to those who call themselves realists or practical men.

Indeed, this was the core of the dispute between Gandhiji and Tilak on the philosophic plane. Gandhiji

was not reconciled to the world as it was and wanted to exert to his utmost to improve it and, therefore, a radical critic like Bepin Chandra Pal called him the founder of the religion of Ahimsa. Tilak was not disposed to attack so fundamental a problem; he was content to accept the world as it was, more or less, that is, to regard its *trividha* character as eternal and seek improvement within that framework. That perhaps explains why Gandhiji attempted to influence and shape the character of those who came in his close contact and Tilak just accepted his friends and colleagues as they were and did not try to mould them after a particular pattern.

Because of this fundamental difference in outlook, Tilak may not have tried to tell even a single of his merchant or lawyer friends to follow a particular code of conduct, but Gandhiji did. A certain amount of deceitfulness on the part of a merchant might have been considered as fit to be overlooked by Tilak, or an admixture of truth and untruth by a lawyer while doing court work might have been condoned by him, but Gandhiji would consider such behaviour as degrading and unworthy and insist on its being given up forthwith. That is why Gandhiji thought that political action could well be non-violent, that life could well be truthful and that business could also be free from deception.

Such a man was deliberately adopted as his father by Jamnalal, knowing fully the implications of what he was doing. Subsequent events proved that Jamnalal did everything humanly possible to remain worthy of the honour that Gandhiji bestowed on him by agreeing to adopt him as his "fifth son". As

Gandhiji himself said later, "Never before was a mortal blessed with a 'son' like him."

In a letter written to Jamnalal from Sabarmati Jail on March 16, 1922, Gandhiji said:

"As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that Truth comprehends everything. It is not in Ahimsa, but Ahimsa is in it. What is perceived by a pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Cling to it, and it enables one to reach pure Truth. There is no question there of divided duty. But often enough it is difficult to decide what is Ahimsa. For instance, the use of disinfectants is *himsa*, and yet we cannot do without it. We have to live a life of Ahimsa in the midst of a world of *himsa*, and that is possible only if we cling to truth. That is how I deduce Ahimsa from truth. Out of truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A votary of truth has to be humble as the dust. His humility increases with his observance of truth. I see this every moment of my life. I have a much vividder sense of truth and of my own littleness than I had a year ago. The wonderful implication of the great truth '*Brahma satyam jagan mithya*' (Brahma is real, all else unreal) grows on me from day to day. It teaches us patience. This will purge us of harshness and add to our tolerance. It will make us magnify the mole-hills of our errors into mountains and minimize the mountains of others' errors into mole-hills. The body persists because of egoism. The utter extinction of the body of egoism is *moksha*. He who has achieved this will be the very image of Truth or one may

call it Brahman. Therefore the loving name of God is *Dasanudasa* (Servant of servants).

“Wife, children, friends, possessions—all should be held subservient to Truth. Each one of these should be sacrificed in the search for Truth. Only then can one be a Satyagrahi. I have thrown myself into this movement with a view to making the observance of this principle comparatively easy, and it is with the same object that I do not hesitate to plunge men like you in it. Its outward form is Hind Swaraj. This Swaraj is being delayed because there is yet to be found a Satyagrahi of that type. This, however, need not dismay us. It should spur us on to greater effort.

“You have made yourself my ‘fifth son’. But I am striving to be worthy. It is not an ordinary responsibility for an adopter. May God help me, and may I be worthy of it in this very life.”*

In the course of another letter written from jail on October 5, 1922, Gandhiji said:

“*Moksha* is liberation from impure thought. Complete extinction of impure thought is impossible without ceaseless penance. There is only one way to achieve this. The moment an impure thought arises, confront it with a pure one. This is possible only with God’s grace, and God’s grace comes through ceaseless communion with Him and complete self-surrender. This communion may, in the beginning, be just a lip

*This is an English rendering by Mahadev Desai of the original letter written in Gujarati, reproduced from the *Harijan* of 22-2-1942, p. 47.

repetition of His name even disturbed by impure thoughts. But ultimately what is on the lips will possess the heart. And there is another thing to bear in mind. The mind may wander, but let not the senses wander with it. If the senses wander where the mind takes them, one is done for. But he who keeps control of the physical senses will some day be able to bring impure thoughts under control.... Impure thoughts need not dismay you. We are monarchs of the domain of Effort. God is sole Monarch of the domain of Result.... You know what to do to create a pure atmosphere about you. Spare diet, sight fixed on the earth below, and impatience with oneself to the extent of plucking the eye out if 'it offends thee'!''*

These two letters sum up Gandhiji's approach to life's problems. This is how he wanted to spiritualize politics; not only politics, but all life. This was his teaching to all who wished to learn from him and Jamnalal was surely the foremost of them. Jamnalal also incessantly strove to make his life non-violent, full of love, full of service, full of goodwill. He accepted all the items of the constructive programme of the Congress initiated by Gandhiji as sacred because they were all purifying agencies. Khadi, village industries, prohibition, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity—all these items of the constructive

* This portion of an original letter written in Gujarati was copied by Jamnalal in his Daily Prayer Book to be ready at hand for contemplation whenever he wanted it. This is reproduced from the English rendering by Mahadev Desai from the *Harijan* of 22-2-1942, p. 47.

programme helped to make the life of the individual and society more sublime, all these helped one to come nearer to truth by promoting the virtues of love, patience, sympathy, fearlessness and peace. What could be more conducive to building up an army of Satyagrahis?

Jamnalal was by nature disposed towards such work; his close association with Gandhiji only strengthened his disposition. He was a businessman, but even in doing business he followed the Gandhian way. He had laid down certain principles in the form of maxims which he himself scrupulously adhered to and wanted fellow businessmen also to follow:

(1) Do not affix your signature on any paper, before you have read it.

(2) Do not take any monetary risks, in the hope that you will make only profits.

(3) Do not hesitate to say 'no'. Every one who wishes for success in life should have in him the strength to convince others of the truth of what he says.

(4) Be cautious while dealing with unacquainted persons; this is not to say that you should treat them with suspicion.

(5) Always be clean, truthful and stainless in your business affairs, and keep a record of everything.

(6) Before you stand surety for any person, know him well.

(7) Keep a strict account of every pie.

(8) Be strictly punctual and keep your engagements without fail.

(9) Do not hold out hopes of doing more, than you can really do.

(10) Be truthful, but not because it pays you to do so.

- (11) Whatever you wish to do, do it today.
- (12) Think only of success, speak only of success, and you will see that you will succeed.
- (13) Have faith in the power of your body and soul.
- (14) Do not ever be ashamed of hard work.
- (15) Never fight shy of plain speaking.

There was complete accord between what Jamnalal preached and practised. He strictly conformed to all these principles.

The traditional business of the Bajaj family was in cotton and indigenous banking. Besides conducting this ancestral business, Jamnalal also started sugar and steel factories. He did business in crores with Indian and foreign businessmen. He had also to deal with several Government departments on this account. His conduct in all his dealings was honest and straightforward.

Cotton was one of his main items of business. His firm used to purchase raw cotton, gin it, bale it and sell it. An unhealthy and dishonest practice was started by certain dealers of sprinkling the cotton with water before baling it. This added to its weight and temporarily improved its colour and staple length. Thus they fetched a better price for it because of its greater staple length, and made a further margin of profit on the inflated weight. But, in fact, the watering damaged the cotton for the purpose of spinning and weaving. Foreign merchants came to know about this trick of Indian dealers and started to offer them lower prices for the cotton. Those who were honest like Jamnalal, also began to suffer on this account. Therefore, many of the honest dealers also were tempted to resort to the malpractice of

watering the cotton. Indian cotton earned a very bad reputation in foreign markets, particularly in Japan, which was importing considerable quantities. This led to a vicious circle wherein the prices of cotton went on sliding down, and the merchants began to add more and more water to the cotton in an attempt to increase the weight and make up their losses. This also led to lower prices being offered to the producers by the ginner and the poor producers had ultimately to suffer on that account. A crisis seemed imminent in the cotton market. Japan was about to stop all imports. Ultimately, the Government had to intervene and put a ban on the malpractice of watering the cotton.

But, all along, Jamnalal's strict orders were that his cotton must not be treated with water. His *munims* were in a predicament. They felt that unless they followed the example of others they may not be able to survive in the competitive market. They tried to convince Jamnalal and obtain his permission to treat the cotton with water. But Jamnalal flatly refused. He said that he did not care to make profits by such means, and he prized honesty above everything. His bales containing pure cotton were marked with the letters B. J. (the initials of his firm, Bachhraj Jamnalal) as a guarantee of their cent per cent purity. However, for those who were prepared to buy watered cotton at lower prices, a few bales were marked with the initials "W.I.C." (i.e. Water In Cotton). Handbills to this effect were also distributed widely. Jamnalal had to pass through a difficult time in the initial stages because of his scrupulous honesty. But, by and by, his action was highly appreciated by the foreign importers, and his cotton bearing the marks B. J.

rapidly grew in demand and fetched better rates. Thus, in the long run he actually made more profits by sticking to his principles.

Jamnalal's Bombay office also worked as an agency for other people's goods, for purchase and sale. For this purpose samples had to be scrutinized. This sample cotton which accumulated in the godowns was ultimately sold and fetched thousands of rupees every year. Jamnalal thought that he was not entitled to the proceeds of the sales of this sample cotton. So he asked his accountants to keep an account of the sales of the samples and to credit the proceeds to the respective merchants' accounts. When he proposed this, his officers were amazed. They said there were hundreds of merchants coming with their goods every day and each one offered ten to twenty seers of cotton as sample; and how could all this cotton be stored and accounted for? Moreover, why should a few thousands a year which traditionally were their profits be given up in this way? But Jamnalal was firm. He, however, realized the practical difficulty of keeping the accounts and, therefore, suggested that the money obtained by the sale of the samples should be distributed at the end of the year among all the merchants in proportion to the number of bales they had sold to him during the year.

Jamnalal had left strict instructions with his *munims* not to maintain any false account books in order to avoid paying income tax, and also never to offer a bribe to any government employee. He wanted everything to be forthright and above-board. Yet, while Jamnalal was in jail during the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha, one of his *munims* acted contrary to his instructions. There were extraordinary profits

in the cotton business during the year and so the assessment of income tax would also have been considerable. The *munim*, therefore, did not show the correct accounts to the Income-tax Officer, expecting that the usual assessment of six to seven thousand rupees would be demanded. But the Officer had information that unusual profits had been made and he assessed the tax arbitrarily at Rs. 85,000. The *munim* was terrified and offered a bribe of Rs. 10,000 to the Officer, with the result that the assessment was slashed down to Rs. 8,000 only. The *munim* was highly pleased with himself, thinking he had done a great service to his master.

After Jamnalal came out of jail he made inquiries about the business. The *munim* had frankly to tell him all that had happened. Jamnalal was extremely pained to find that, despite his orders, his name was blackened by such behaviour. He severely reprimanded the *munim*. He then gathered all his staff and warned them that he insisted on absolutely fair and honest dealings in his business even if that brought him losses and led his business to ruin. The same day Jamnalal went to Sabarmati, placed all the facts before Gandhiji and asked him how he could atone for such deceitful behaviour, on the part of his employee. Gandhiji advised him that the money which the *munim* had saved should be given over for public work. He will then be convinced that Jamnalal did not wish to retain with him any money so earned, and would, therefore, never again try to make profits by improper methods.

The House of Tatas has from the beginning to this day maintained traditions of honesty and forthrightness in their many activities in different fields

of industry and commerce and have been in a way trying to implement the Gandhian idea of acting as trustees of their earnings without boasting to do so. Jamnalal's code of conduct being the same, it is not surprising that he attracted the attention of the Tatas who sought his association in their business activities.

Tata used to take keen interest in young businessmen with character, because he felt that by encouraging them to start new industries the country would be benefited. He, therefore, helped them off and on by offering them shares of industrial concerns at face value, although the market rates were very much higher so as to induce them to invest in new industries.

Those were days of the first World War. The prices of cloth had risen very high. The shares of the textile mills always kept on rising because they were much in demand. Tata induced Jamnalal to purchase 5,000 shares of the Sassoon group of mills, and offered him 5,000 shares at their face value of Rs. 10/- per share although the market rate was Rs. 14/-. But Jamnalal would not agree to purchase these shares at Rs. 10/-. He informed Tata that if he (Tata) advised him that it was a good investment to purchase these shares, he would like to purchase them only at the current market rate of Rs. 14/- and not at a concession. So while thanking Tata for his kind offer, he returned the shares to him. Tata was very much impressed by Jamnalal's integrity and straightforwardness, and their association became still closer.

In those days, Indian companies had already been started for doing life insurance business but they were not doing other types of insurance. Such insurance

business was done by foreign companies which earned a good deal of profit thereby. Jamnalal thought a considerable amount of profit going to foreign countries could be saved and retained in India if an Indian company were started for general insurance business. He even got information that formerly Indian firms had been insuring foreign goods and earning big profits. He studied the proposition and discussed this scheme with Sir Lallubhai Samaldas and Ramnarain Ruia and later with Sir Victor Sassoon who advised him to get the co-operation of the Tatas also. As a result the New India Assurance Company Ltd. was floated in 1919 with a large capital mainly for doing fire, marine and other general insurance. This was the first Indian multi-purpose insurance house. Later a life insurance department was also added in 1929.

Jamnalal was one of the founder-directors of this company. This being the first Indian venture of its kind, Jamnalal not only wanted it to be run as a model institution, but also desired that it should work for the benefit of the Indian investors and insurers. That is why he opposed the proposal that the shares of the company should be underwritten by the directors so that they could get Rs. 2/- per share as underwriting commission, although it meant a loss of several thousands of rupees to him. Ultimately, he was induced by the other directors, although very much against his wish, to agree to accept a compromise of twelve annas per share to be paid as brokerage to the directors. Similarly, he opposed the appointment of managing agents for the company. He secured business for the company from many of his friends, but unfortunately he was not able to induce all the other directors to

place their own business with the company. Later on, he had differences of opinion with the other directors, and resigned his directorship, as he felt that the company was not being run as a truly Swadeshi institution should be run in the interest of the investors and the public.

Jamnalal was doing business in the cotton market in partnership with Seth Ramnarain Ruia, a leading businessman, who was also a close friend of the Sassoons. The Sassoons once told Ramnarain to dispose of ginning factory in Warora owned by them for a suitable price. After receiving offers from various parties, Ramnarain sold the factory to Jamnalal, who had made the highest bid. But, later on, some of the merchants who had earlier made lower bids in the hope of knocking down the factory at a cheap price, approached the Sassoons direct with higher offers, making it appear that Ramnarain had sold it to his friend Jamnalal at a concession. When the Sassoons discussed this matter with Ramnarain he was deeply pained at the misunderstanding. The situation might have resulted in estrangement between the Sassoons and Ramnarain, harming the interests of both. But when Jamnalal came to know of this, he told Ramnarain that, although he had got the factory in a fair deal, he did not want to embarrass him in any way and was, therefore, ready to hand it back to the Sassoons who could sell it to anyone they liked at a higher price. This offer voluntarily to surrender a profitable deal for the sake of loyalty to a friend endeared Jamnalal all the more to Ramnarain, and their association became still closer in many fields of activity. Throughout their lifetime they remained the most intimate friends.

There is another incident characteristic of Jamnalal. Seth Ramgopal Hirālāl had worked in partnership with Seth Bachhraj, and after Bachhrajji's death Jamnalal continued the partnership business. When it was decided to establish the Marwadi Vidyālaya in Bombay, Jamnalal offered a donation of Rs. 11,000 towards it, on behalf of the firm. Seth Ramgopal was then in Marwad. When he came back and learnt about this donation, he did not approve of it. Jamnalal said that, once given, the donation could not be withdrawn; but if Ramgopal did not agree, it could be debited to his personal account instead of the joint account of the firm. Even this did not satisfy Ramgopal, and he wanted to terminate the partnership on this issue. So it was decided to wind up the firm and distribute the assets between the partners. The firm had in its possession hundreds of cotton bales. Ramgopal said they should be sold in auction. But Jamnalal felt that it was not quite an honourable step to take and moreover the goods may not fetch a proper price. So he offered to buy them all at the then current market rates. This meant his paying a higher price than the firm's purchase price, but he did not mind it. •

The firm owned a ginning factory with a building at Wardha. Ramgopal kept the building for himself and gave the factory machinery to Jamnalal, thinking that Jamnalal would not be able to run the factory for lack of capital. Certain friends of Ramgopal told him that a building without the factory would be useless and he should retain the factory as well in his share. When Jamnalal got scent of this he immediately informed Ramgopal that he was willing to make over the factory also to him. But Ramgopal was

adamant. He refused to take the factory. Perhaps, he might have suspected that Jamnalal was trying to pass it on to him because he would not be able to run it himself. But, with the help of his friends, Jamnalal was able to arrange for the necessary capital for his business, which went on flourishing day by day. Unluckily for Ramgopal, his business went on deteriorating after the termination of the partnership; and he came into difficulties. But Jamnalal had always a soft corner for his old partner, in spite of all that had happened, and he continued to help him and his family during their difficult days.

Jamnalal was ever ready to extend a helping hand to any fellow businessman. A letter written to him by Shantikumar Narottam Morarji on September 1, 1933, testifies to this trait of his. The letter says, "I do not know how to express my gratitude to you for helping at the nick of time with such a large amount. I may also mention here that in the wide circle of friends and sympathizers of my father and also of my rich relations, I have not come across anyone who has helped me till now as you have done."

There was a young man called Chiranjilal Badjota who carried on a prosperous cotton business for some time. But misfortune befell him and he not only lost his money but also ran into debts. Jamnalal gave him shelter and employed him. Once he took leave and went to help a relation of his in some work. He fell ill after his return and was in bed for four or five months. Jamnalal's *munim* did not pay his salary during this period, nor did he find out what was the matter with him. Meanwhile, Chiranjilal was in extreme difficulty and was carrying on by selling his belongings one after another. Jamnalal was

unaware of what was happening. When he came to know of this, he was extremely sorry and felt that he himself was responsible and guilty for this neglect of an employee. He went straight to his house and apologized to him for what had happened and paid him the salary for the period of his absence. Chiranjilal was deeply moved at Jamnalal's action. He has always remained a true and faithful employee and well-wisher of Jamnalal and his family ever since to this day.

Jamnalal's kindness was something natural to him. Once a cowboy was gored by a cow and sent to hospital for treatment. Jamnalal himself went there several times to see how he was progressing. This was also his way with his servants and others who came in contact with him. In spite of his many-sided and multifarious activities he used to take personal interest in their welfare. But as his public work went on increasing, he found less and less time for supervising his own affairs. He, therefore, formed a committee of three to look after his Wardha establishment. He did not want to pull the strings and control every little affair. But, nonetheless, whenever he had time he used to keep himself informed of what was going on.

The words that Jamnalal used to write on his account books on the new year's day (Diwali) clearly reflected his selfless, altruistic and god-fearing nature. It was a prayer to Goddess Lakshmi to give him good sense always to carry on business truthfully and honestly and to direct him to spend his earnings for the good of his fellowmen who were in need.

Jamnalal entertained one ambition throughout life that none should think ill of him when his time came for leaving this world. He eminently realized

his aspiration. He had no enemies. He befriended all by his love and magnanimity. The way he behaved with even those who differed from him can be illustrated by his conduct towards a friend called Pathikji, who was associated with him in the Indian States' People's movement for freedom. Because they had some differences regarding policy, Pathikji left Wardha and went to Rajasthan. Once when the Dewan of Udaipur met Jamnalal, he began to talk ill of Pathikji. Jamnalal flatly and instantly told the Dewan that he could not poison his mind against Pathikji, who was a patriot, and that he would tolerate no unjust criticism of his erstwhile colleague. The Dewan wanted that Jamnalal should forbid his entry into the Khadi establishment under his charge, but Jamnalal said that that would never happen, and Pathikji would always be welcome as far as he was concerned in spite of his differences with him.

How strictness was tempered with kindness in Jamnalal's character is well illustrated by another story. A relative of his once borrowed money from him for his marriage. Jamnalal knew that he would not be able to return the money and hence made it clear to him that it should be regarded as a gift and need not be returned. The relative, however, insisted that it must be regarded as a loan and so accounted in the books. Three years passed and yet the money was not even partially repaid. Jamnalal, therefore, got a suit filed for recovery of the amount. The relative came to Jamnalal and began to fret and fume, but Jamnalal was adamant and refused to withdraw the suit and obtained a decree against him. But he never had it executed. He had already written off the amount. When some one asked him

why he had taken the trouble to go to court even when he had no intention to recover the amount, his reply was characteristic: "We must always differentiate between friendship and business. My relative's conduct was wholly unbusinesslike and I wanted to teach him a lesson. If I had not gone to court, it would have meant that I was afraid of his abuses. I did not want such an impression to be created. But I never wanted to persecute him and so I wrote off the amount even after securing a decree against him." Even after this incident, Jamnalal behaved like a friend with this relative.

One of the relatives of Bachhrajji filed a suit against Jamnalal claiming a right to part of his property. The case went on for years. Hundreds of books of account and documents were scrutinized and went into the evidence. One of the old books of account had certain entries which Jamnalal's lawyers and *munims* thought might go against him. So one of the *munims* decided to suppress this book. When Jamnalal came to know of this, he was deeply hurt. He told his *munims* and lawyers that nothing was to be suppressed even if it was thought to be inimical to his interests, because he wanted truth to prevail. The book was, therefore, produced in court. It so happened that while delivering the judgment in the case, which was in favour of Jamnalal, the judge relied on this very document as a strong piece of evidence in his favour! Once the case was over, Jamnalal forgot all the trouble to which he had been put by this relative, and befriended him and his family as if nothing had happened to mar their good relations.

Illustrations like these could be given in plenty, but only one more is recounted here. There was a

lawyer in Nagpur, a friend whom Jamnalal had often helped in various ways. When he had an eye trouble which interfered with his work, Jamnalal had his eye-sight restored by securing expert treatment. But this very lawyer appeared on behalf of the two Marathi journals, *Chitra* and *Savadhan* against whom Jamnalal had filed libel suits for making defamatory statements about him. During the course of cross-examination this lawyer asked Jamnalal some questions which were perfectly irrelevant, and calculated, if not intended, to damage his reputation. A friend reminded Jamnalal about the apparent ingratitude of this lawyer friend after all that he had done to help him. But Jamnalal requested him not to refer to it. He said that one had a free choice whether to help and oblige anybody, or not, but once one decides to help some one it should be done without expecting any returns.

Jamnalal was a businessman, a factory-owner, a capitalist; but he had great sympathy for the workers. Selfish interests never clouded his love of justice and his humanitarian outlook. There was an arbitration board established to adjudicate upon disputes between the owners and workers of the textile mills in Ahmedabad. Gandhiji represented the workers, but when he was too much preoccupied with political and other work, someone else had to take his place. Such was the faith in Jamnalal's integrity that Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, who was then a leader of the Ahmedabad workers, wrote to him on March 26, 1930, requesting him to take Gandhiji's place, although Jamnalal was an employer himself. Gandhiji, of course, fully approved of the step and Jamnalal complied with Shri Nanda's request.

Gandhiji fully appreciated Jamnalal's views on the employer-employee relations. Jamnalal was requested to preside over a Conference of shop-assistants in Bombay in 1937. Commenting on this incident at the time, Gandhiji wrote: .

“To have the Conference presided over by Jamnalalji who has numerous shop-assistants in his employment is significant; significant because Jamnalalji knows in his heart no distinction between a Seth and a servant, and his shop-assistants, cooks, coachmen and other servants are treated as members of the family. He knows that they need leisure as he needs it, he knows that they need a holiday occasionally as he needs it (but rarely takes it), he knows that they need to live with their wives and children in fair comfort, in clean and well-ventilated habitations, and be capable of looking after their own and their children's educational and medical needs, even as he needs to do so. And he also knows the wretched lot of the average shop-assistant, sweating for ten to thirteen hours without a holiday on a miserable salary, having to go on leave, if he can get it, without pay, losing every day in health, living a life without cheer, an eternal grind from morning till night.”

One of Jamnalal's characteristics was that he rarely forgot any individual who had come in his contact. Not only did he remember his physiognomy, but also all that he had heard about him, his needs, his family, his health, etc. He took personal pleasure in solving people's difficulties. There was no end to the number of disputes he had adjusted and conciliations he had brought about. He used to keep a

day-to-day diary almost from 1912 onwards and its many pages are very revealing. They offer a thorough insight into his character. One such instance about his solicitude for people culled from his diary may be given here. On September 4, 1941, he wrote about a maid servant in his household called Kashi: "There is much that one can learn from Kashi. She is not at all unhappy in her present condition. She does not care to have any luxury. She is an introvert and has true knowledge. It is necessary that she should be enabled to live in peace till the end."

No sacrifice was considered too great by Jamnalal when a principle was at stake. As President of the Charkha Sangh, it was only obvious that he should use only Khaddar for his personal needs. But there was no obligation on him that he should not run a textile mill. As a matter of fact, he owned some shares in textile mills also. Holding the shares of such mills was in effect as good as part proprietorship of the mills, and so formal logic showed that there was nothing wrong in wholly owning or controlling and running a textile mill. That was the counsel of many of his friends. Further, he was persuaded to argue with himself for a while that he could run a model mill in accordance with Gandhian principles, and making reasonable profits without exploiting the workers, and thus show the way to others. He, therefore, decided to enter into an agreement for purchasing a textile mill on behalf of his company.

But Jamnalal's wife, Janakidevi, was much perturbed. She thought there might be logical consistency in the arguments advanced by Jamnalal's friends, but there was no moral consistency. A Khaddar propagandist could not be a direct producer of mill

cloth. That was her simple, common-sense view. She was afraid that her husband was being lured into a wrong path. She, therefore, ran up to Gandhiji and placed her views before him frankly. Gandhiji thought she was quite right. Meantime, Sardar Patel had also informed Gandhiji about this matter. Gandhiji immediately wrote to Jamnalal. His letter of September 27, 1934, makes poignant reading:

“Vallabhbhai informs me that you are about to buy up a textile mill at...; ‘you’, i.e. the firm. The news did give me a shock. It seemed to me incongruous for one who has so deeply interested himself in Khadi to become a mill-owner. I could not, however, make up my mind to write to you anything about it. In the meanwhile Janakimaiya came to see me yesterday. A great load is off her mind as the *Madhyama* examination, for which she appeared, is over. She is, however, ill at ease ever since she heard of this proposal. ‘For whose benefit can this incubus be?’ she asks. The children too do not approve of it. The servants say: ‘Now that the master is going to have mill of his own, he won’t ask us to put on Khadi.’ No one has liked this step. Do, therefore, give up the idea. If the bargain has already been made, you may withdraw your share from it. The other partners are free to purchase it, if they wish. If you are only in need of a business, there are many other avenues open to you. If you need more earnings for charitable purposes, we can very well do without such charity. Om* twits me by saying: ‘You prompt Kakaji to purchase a mill because you

*Pet name of Umadevi, youngest daughter of Jamnalal

want more money for the Congress, don't you?"

What answer can I give to them all? If possible, do convey by wire the happy news of cancellation."

In the meanwhile, even after he had decided about the purchase of the mill, Jamnalal was uneasy in mind and was cogitating whether after all he had taken a right decision. From entries in his diary it can be gathered that even before he received Gandhiji's letter he had reversed his earlier decision and finally made up his mind against purchasing the mill.

Gandhiji was greatly pleased at this. He wrote to Jamnalal: "I was relieved to learn that you have been saved from the encumbrance of the mill. The scare of that wolf coming gave me a fine demonstration of the mentality of Janakibehn and the children. It delighted me to see them all agitated so much. We may wish this spirit to abide with them for ever."

Jamnalal had inherited an estate worth only five or six lakhs of rupees, but on account of his ability, foresight, honesty and integrity he increased his business to such an extent, that he could spend more than 25 lakhs in charity. We have it on the testimony of Gandhiji and Dr. Rajendra Prasad that Jamnalalji was scrupulous about every pie he spent out of public funds, while he did not hesitate to give away lakhs from out of his own money for charity and public causes. Yet, certain unkind and malicious critics maligned him by saying that he was taking the benefit of the funds of the Congress because he was its treasurer. But such critics were effectively silenced by Jawaharlal Nehru who was General Secretary of the Congress for many years. He issued a statement once in which he said that the accounts of the Congress were scrupu-

lously kept and audited and statements of accounts were published from time to time in the newspapers for the information of the public. The whole credit for this was due to Jamnalal Bajaj who was its treasurer. Even when there was sufficient cause, it was not the practice of the Congress to resort to litigation; but if malicious and defamatory statements continued to be made, the Congress would not hesitate to go to court to vindicate its reputation." Such was the high esteem in which Jamnalal was universally held as an upright man.

This is what Vinoba has said regarding Jamnalal's regard for truth in business:

"Jamnalalji's life and personality had many facets. Among these, his business dealings also constituted an important one. He was an extraordinary votary of truth and non-violence. It has become a great problem in these days, how truth can endure in trade. As a matter of fact, business can be built up only on truth. Honesty, truthfulness, keeping up a promise, equality, justice tempered by mercy, behaviour with colleagues and servants as if they are members of one's family, participating in the happiness and misery of all, diligence, skill, efficiency in accounts, foresight, anxiety for social welfare, common sense, etc., are all inseparable from the Dharma of a Vaishya. But in these days when money has usurped the place of Lakshmi (the Goddess of Wealth), untruth is being counted as cleverness, cruelty is regarded as skill and truth is divorced from trade. In these circumstances, it is beneficial to remember how people like Jamnalalji, who weighed everything in the

scales of truth, constantly endeavoured to carry on their business without sacrificing truth."

CHAPTER VIII VINOBA'S INFLUENCE

Reference has previously been made to the fact that when Gandhiji was unable to comply with Jamnalal's request to make Wardha his home, he agreed to send Vinoba to Wardha to take charge of the Satyagraha Ashram. When he settled down there, Vinoba practically became a member of Jamnalal's family. He was held in the highest respect by the entire family, and became their preceptor, mentor and monitor. Even to this day Jamnalal's wife, sons, daughters, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and nephew frequently meet Vinoba during his *Padayatra* tours and draw inspiration from him.

Jamnalal looked upon Gandhiji as his father, and upon Vinoba as his Guru. The respect and esteem in which Gandhiji and Vinoba mutually held each other are something extraordinary. Vinoba regarded Gandhiji as his father. He had first gone to the Himalayas for shelter but ultimately he found in Gandhiji a better haven. What was Gandhiji's own estimate about Vinoba? Even as early as 1917, while acquainting C. F. Andrews about him, Gandhiji said: "He is one of the few pearls in the Ashram. They do not come, like others, to be blessed by the Ashram, but to bless it." Gandhiji selected him as the first Satyagrahi when the Individual Satyagraha campaign was launched in 1940. Gandhiji's advice to the inmates of Sabarmati Ashram always was that if at any time

they found any discrepancy between what he said and Vinoba said, Vinoba's should be regarded as the last and conclusive word. Indeed, there were occasions when Gandhiji set aside his own judgment and followed that of Vinoba.

Such was the man whom the Bajaj family had as their spiritual guide. Kamalnayan has recorded a reminiscence which sheds further light on the character of Vinoba. Once when he was taking some lesson from Vinoba, the latter happened to receive a letter. As soon as he had read it, he tore it into pieces and threw it away. Kamalnayan, who was sitting near, recognized from the handwriting that it was a letter from Gandhiji. So, out of curiosity he later put all the torn pieces together and completely deciphered it. One sentence in it was: "*Tumse badhkar achchha atma meri jankarimen nahin hai*" (I do not know of a greater soul than you). If a lesser person had received such a testimonial from Gandhiji, he would have preserved it as his most prized possession, but Vinoba was different, a rare human being.

Kamalnayan asked him in his boyish curiosity why he had destroyed such a valuable letter from Gandhiji with such unconcern. Vinoba replied, "You know that is my practice. I destroy all papers that are not useful to me in future. Bapu is great and in his magnanimous way he wrote what he thought of me, but he has apparently not seen my shortcomings." Jamnalal was extremely fortunate, and so was his family, to secure the constant company of two such men as Gandhiji and Vinoba.

Vinoba was a man who loved solitude and meditation more than mixing among people, except for the few villagers among whom he had set up his Ashram

first at Nalwadi, a Harijan village, and later at Paunar, near Wardha. It was only after Gandhiji's death and when he started the Bhoodan campaign that he has always been on the move and in the midst of the masses. In a letter written to Janakidevi, he described himself as one who regarded the world as unreal and one who did not relish what are called the good things of life. He referred to a poem of Tagore in which a person was described as unlucky, being advised to carry on his lonely march. He said the poem was applicable to him with this difference that he did not regard himself as unlucky. He considered himself, on the other hand, as quite lucky.

In a letter written to Jamnalal, Vinoba said:

“In my mental vocabulary three words have become synonyms. They are ‘Mother’, ‘Gita’ and ‘Takli’*. All my family treasure is summed up in the word ‘Mother’. In ‘Gita’ is contained all my study from the Vedas to the compositions of the saints and seers, and in the word ‘Takli’ is treasured up the benefit I have had of the association with Bapu.”

In another letter he has explained himself more fully:

“Whether you call it my desire or my feeling, it actuates me to do only two things. One is to meditate upon God and the other is to keep on spinning on the Takli throughout the day. I do not feel like doing a third thing. Teaching, writing, discussion, lecturing—all these appear to me to be figuratively zero. Meditation and spinning have the same meaning for me, and

*Spindle-like instrument for spinning cotton or wool.

therefore I consider them as one. If you add a zero or zeroes to this one integral figure, its value will increase tenfold, hundredfold, thousandfold and so on, but without the integral figure these zeroes are worthless. I worry about the integral figure most. The whole world is capable of taking care of the zeroes, to be added."

It will be wrong to think that Vinoba is sick of life or activity. He is as fond of struggling to solve spiritual and philosophic conundrums as he is of cleaning latrines. He is intense and whole-hearted in whatever he does. In search of God, he gave up his home and his studies and went away to the Himalayas, but he found his God in Gandhiji's association in the form of humanity and its service. For a long period, the distance of only four miles separated them, because Vinoba was staying at Paunar and Gandhiji at Sevagram, but it has so happened that for months and years they did not even meet each other; yet the mental communion between them was constantly at work.

Such a man was chosen by Jamnalal for his Guru. Jamnalal often said, "I can never be happy or at peace without his company." In a letter written to his wife in 1932 from Dhulia jail he wrote, "My mental health is quite good. I am getting so much benefit, happiness and peace from Vinoba's company and his discourses as to last me for the rest of my life." Again, in a letter written to his daughter Madalene, he expressed the same feeling of gratefulness. He said, "It is God's benign grace that I am deriving such happiness and benefit from Vinoba's association." In his diary for 1924 he recorded: "On July 23, Vinoba gave a very beautiful and effective discourse

in honour of Tilak's birthday." His diary again recorded on February 25, 1934, "Listened to Vinoba. The discourse was extremely delightful."

In 1941, Vinoba and Jamnalal were again together in Nagpur jail. Jamnalal wrote the daily diary even in the jail. That was the first thing he did every morning, whether he was at home, on tour or anywhere else. He recorded on January 6, 1941, that Vinoba's discourses on Tulasidasji's Ramayana were full of feeling and went directly to the heart. On January 15, he wrote, "My faith in Vinoba increases with every day that passes. I shall deem myself blessed when God will make me worthy of that faith. Bapu can give me a father's love and Vinoba a Guru's affection, if I strive to make myself worthy of them." On another occasion Jamnalal observed, "There are many who are good and true but Vinoba excels them all."

On reading Vinoba's discourses of late, ever since he embarked on his Bhoodan campaign, one finds how rich, how original and how fresh he is every time. For sheer learning in various branches of knowledge, there will be few equals of this marvellous personality. Discoursing on a certain *richa* from the Rigveda, Vinoba once observed, "A rich man who goes on accumulating riches day after day, regardless of the condition of the people around him, verily leads himself along the path to death, instead of earning wealth." That set Jamnalal a-thinking and he decided to see that his behaviour was fully in consonance with the dictum that Vinoba had almost casually preached. This does not mean that Jamnalal had any reason to feel guilty, for, all along

he had been striving to help and serve his fellow-men being constantly aware of their condition. In spite of this, he felt that he was deficient, imperfect and far from the ideal preached by Gandhiji and Vinoba.

In Dhulia jail, when Vinoba gave his famous discourses on the Gita, Sane Guruji, who was also an inmate of the jail, used to take them down. That is how these discourses became available to the people outside, first published in Marathi and later translated into a number of languages including English. During his tour in West Khandesh in 1958, Vinoba paid a visit to Dhulia jail and then went into a reminiscent mood. He spoke of the jail as a place of pilgrimage because it was sanctified by the residence of such men as Jamnalal, Sane Guruji, Apte Guruji and others. Besides, it was here, he said that God made him and Sane Guruji His instruments for conveying the message of the Gita to the world through the discourses. Jamnalal always considered himself extremely fortunate that he had an opportunity to hear these discourses from Vinoba's own lips.

Vinoba did not preserve any letters that were written to him, but most of the letters written by him to others have luckily been preserved. In a letter written by him to Jamnalal on November 21, 1934, he said:

“Received your letter sent on your birthday. I trust that God has ordained that you should render even greater service hereafter than you have done hitherto. I consider that the physical suffering you had to undergo during last year is only a harbinger of service to be rendered by you in future. God's mercy is wonderful. Who can

ever fathom it? But, we do not need to understand its meaning. It is enough for us that we have faith."

The Kanyashram at Wardha had been started by Jamnalal mainly for the education of the daughters of the Satyagrahis who had suffered in the freedom movement. At one stage it was felt that it was not fully serving its purpose and the question of its continuance was under consideration. It was rather painful for Jamnalal that such an institution might have to be closed. But Vinoba, who was in charge of the institution, did not hesitate to face the facts squarely. He wrote in this connection:

"I have not been able to arrive at a decision in regard to the Kanyashram. But whatever decision I take will be in consonance with our sense of duty. It may be necessary to change the character of the institution considerably or even entirely. But whatever is beneficial, salutary and indispensable will have to be done. It will be better if you cease to have anxiety about its future. I am not of the view that an institution should be totally scrapped because it has become slightly cumbersome. Bapu also is not of that view. But if duty enjoins it on us, we should not be deterred from taking a drastic step. Otherwise, while intending to do service, we might do disservice. We have not started the institution with any selfish motive or for its own sake. We shall do whatever is required of us in order to promote the objects we had kept in view."

Ultimately it was decided not to close down the institution and Jamnalal was very happy that he

could continue to help and serve his colleagues in the freedom struggle and their families.

Vinoba reciprocated Jamnalal's respect and regard. He would carefully listen to Jamnalal and act on his suggestions when occasion demanded. Jamnalal always urged Vinoba to mix more among the people, to speak to them, to write to them. In a letter written to him on November 8, 1932, Vinoba said, "I try to act on your suggestions, made directly or indirectly, as far as it agrees with my temperament. I am making the acquaintance of more people and writing more letters. I am also trying to regulate my daily routine."

It is well known that in accordance with Gandhiji's advice Jamnalal did not send his children to the conventional schools for their education. But the idea never was to starve them intellectually, but on the contrary to educate them in national institutions or else in an Ashram. Accordingly Kamalnayan was sent first to the Sabarmati Ashram and later to the Gujarat Vidyapeeth at Ahmedabad for his studies. Even Janakidevi was "educated" by staying at Sabarmati Ashram from time to time. The girls were sent to the Kanyashram.

Of course, Vinoba was there to advise and guide them, but in 1932, Jamnalal requested Vinoba to take Kamalnayan and Madalasa directly under his care. Replying to Jamnalal's request Vinoba wrote in a lighter vein:

"I am quite willing to take charge of Kamalnayan's education. But God only knows whether I shall have the strength to carry this load of 150 lbs.* I like his good nature and frankness.

*Kamalnayan who was just 17 years old at the time was rather bulky for his age.

But he lacks a little in self-control and Madalasa is rather weak and lean, but she can use this God-given gift for her well-being if she so desires. She seems to lack firmness, but she has the quality of devotion to God, and what kinship I feel for one who has devotion cannot be described."

Both of them underwent a rigorous course of discipline and learning under Vinoba, who looked after their mental and moral development like a true Guru of our ancient traditions. No amount of formal education could have helped them to get a deep insight into life's problems and to develop their personalities as the few years spent under Vinoba's tutelage did.

The unique relationship between Vinoba and Bajaj family, which had its beginnings over forty years ago, continues to this day.

Jamnalal had a big household, consisting of his brothers' and sisters' children, and a number of other relations and friends all of whom he treated alike. As a matter of fact his "family" consisted of not only his near relations, but a large number of political, social and constructive workers who were always welcome to stay with him as members of the household, apart from the numerous guests who frequently came on various errands.

Once Jamnalal, while in an introspective mood, wrote down the names of persons who were near and dear to him and denoted his "relationship" with them. According to this document, Gandhiji was his "father" and Vinoba was his "Guru". He mentions Kasturba and Mata Anandmayi as his "mothers". Janakidevi is, of course, mentioned as wife. Among his "sons" are mentioned his nephews Radhakrishna

Bajaj, Gulabchand, Prahlad and Shriram and Rameshwar Nevatia (his son-in-law), besides Kamalnayan and Ramkrishna. Shrikrishnadas Jaju, Kishorlal Mashruwala, Keshavdev Nevatia, Haribhau Upadhyaya, Father Verrier Elwin, Gulzarilal Nanda, Lalji Mehrotra, Gangabishan Bajaj, Rameshwar Podar and Narayandas Gandhi are mentioned among his "brothers". Among those he has described as "like sons" are Krishnadas Gandhi, Neelkanth Mashruwala, Rishabhadas Ranka, Girdhar Bajaj and Ramcharan Soni. Among his "sisters" there are Keshar, Gulab, Gomtibahen Mashruwala, Suvratadevi Ruia, Mirabahen (Miss Margaret Slade), Sofia Somji (Khan) and Shrimati Dani, and among his "daughters" appear the names of Kamala, Madalasa, Om, Narmada, Shanta Ruia, and Tara Mashruwala. The large "family" which Jamnalal has enumerated shows his love and affection for those who were near to him, and whom he actually treated as members of his own family. As a matter of fact, his "family" extended even much further. He maintained thick relationship with all the leaders of the freedom movement with whom he came in contact, so that even the other members of their families became his own relations.

Although his love was so pervasive, he never hesitated to be plainspoken and strict in word and action when a question of a principle was involved. One classic example of this is a letter that he wrote to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel from Paunar (Wardha) on November 4, 1938, reproduced below:

"Revered Vallabhbhai,

I am entering today my fiftieth year. During these years, instead of uplifting myself I have rather gone down. A good many shortcomings

are also noticeable in me. With God's grace and the blessings of revered Bapu, and Vinoba I shall perhaps be able to overcome my defects and see a royal way to my salvation; otherwise there will remain no charm in life....

From the talk we had in Delhi at Birla House in the presence of Bhai Ghanashyamdas, it was quite clear my behaviour and dealings gave you a good deal of sorrow and pain. I too felt the same way. I was so much hurt and pained that I have been unable to forget it in spite of my trying hard to do so. Only time can heal it. Under these circumstances, if I had met you, it would have only opened up the old wounds and given further pain to both of us. That is why I deliberately refrained from meeting you during my visits to Bombay.

I have been looking upon you as my elder brother and shall always continue to do so to my fullest capacity, so in this 'private' letter, I have addressed you as 'revered'. In public letters, I feel like addressing you as only 'dear'. I am prepared to admit that may be I am in the wrong in respect of the sharp differences of opinion which have arisen between you and me; but what can I do when certain things are deeply embedded in my heart?

I had almost forgotten about the Nariman and Sharif episodes. But from the remarks you made in Delhi, I realized that you were deeply affected; you were greatly hurt by the letters I wrote to Gangadharrao, Deo and Swami, and you expressed your pain by giving the examples of Dr. Khare and others. Still, my conscience

does not say that I did wrong in writing those letters. So, what can I do?

I can only say, if you can believe me, that in spite of all that has happened I still continue to have great regard and reverence for you, because of your many good points. I wonder at your bravery and tenacity in carrying to success whatever you undertake. I am happy when I hear people speak highly of you. Similarly, when people speak ill of you, I at once join issue with them. I do it because I look upon you as mine.

Even if members of a family differ from one another or notice defects in one another, they cannot break away. I do notice some shortcomings in you, and some defects and weaknesses in your nature. These are sometimes discussed in the presence of Bapu and our common friends and colleagues. But my object is only that even these shortcomings should disappear. I wish to continue to worship you because of your good qualities and our mutual family-like relations, and not by looking upon your shortcomings as good qualities.

I once again wish to repeat that the more your prestige grows and the more you are respected and loved among your friends, the happier I shall feel, and few others are likely to feel as happy as myself. I do not wish that friends and colleagues should love you out of fear. This could be the only point of difference between us.

What did I proceed to write, and what have I actually written? Well! Ultimately I have recorded only my feelings frankly, and that too towards an elder brother. Why should one fear about it?

I learnt that under such circumstances, you would not like even to stay with me. Naturally, I was pained by this. I do not wish to blame you, though in a sense, I can do so. You must look upon my house as yours. Besides, it is not my own entirely. It belongs as much to Janakidevi, Kamalnayan, Madalasa, Radhakrishna and others, who regard you with reverence and love. Many of them have no idea even now about the differences between us. Is it not unfair to them that you should give up staying with us?

Yes, you can well avoid discussion with me on any political or public matters till our differences are settled. But why can't we discuss family matters and indulge in light-hearted talk? Please think about this. As for myself I can certainly go to your son Dahyabhai, eat at his place and even box his ears. Is it necessary that our differences, such as they are, should be carried even among the children? Is that just and fair?

If you are my well-wisher, you must help me with all your heart to remain away from public work as long as I do not become fit again to serve enthusiastically with all my heart and mind, and also relieve me by taking upon yourself the burden of whatever little work and responsibilities I have. How else can you remove my shortcomings?...Kindly give me your blessings that I may gain the strength and the good sense to get rid of my weaknesses."

This letter clearly reflects all of Jamnalal's mental qualities. His self-respect, frankness, firmness, courage and devotion are all so obvious in it. But, with all

that, he is anxious to avoid a break and alienation, while remaining firm on principles. This was his native trait, further strengthened by the influence of Gandhiji and Vinoba.

Writing "Two Words" by way of Foreword to a book of reminiscences of Jamnalalji,* Vinoba said:

"I am forgetting day by day the superficial reminiscences. The reminiscences of deeper significance have always remained in my mind, and they are finding expression in the form of Bhoodan and Sampattidan (donation of wealth). Jamnalalji's memory gives me strength in these activities, and I trust, his good wishes are always with us, wherever his soul may be resting. The book of reminiscences will be published and with the passage of time it might be forgotten. But good thoughts will abide for eternity. I have not kept any material which helps in writing ordinary reminiscences, because my habit has been to consign all papers and notes written from time to time to fire. I understand my co-workers are trying to search for my letters for useless collection. I hope God will grant them good sense and discrimination to choose between substance and shadow. Substance finds expression in life. It is self-illuminating."

**Smarananjali*, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi, 1957.

CHAPTER IX

SOME LESS KNOWN ASPECTS

Swami Vivekananda once observed:

“If you really want to judge the character of a man, look not at his great performances, but watch his most common actions. Those are indeed the things which tell you the real character of a great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he is the really great man whose character is great always, the same wherever he may be.”

A study of Jamnalal's character from this point of view, on the basis of the testimony of a number of persons, reveals that his gentleness, generosity and readiness to serve were uniformly the same always and everywhere. A number of anecdotes and reminiscences in support of this may be cited here. A few reminiscences of Raihanabahen Tyabji, grand-daughter of the late Shri Abbas Tyabji are eloquent. Raihanabahen's father died in 1936. Jamnalal said to her, “Raihanabahen, you need not worry at all. You may regard me as your elder brother.” He took her with him to Wardha. One day she accompanied him to the Lakshminarayan temple at his request. He wished her to sing there in praise of God. He did not hesitate at all to take a Muslim girl to a Hindu temple, of course, if she had no objection. He himself regarded God as the same to all, whether one worshipped Him in a temple, mosque, church, *agiary* or *gurudwara*. As Raihana and Jamnalal got down from his car, she

heard some one singing the *Rag Asavari* to the accompaniment of the sweet sound of a *tanpura*. As Raihana entered the temple and looked round, she noticed* an old blind man singing melodiously a *bhajan* in praise of Lakshminarayan. Raihana was spell-bound. When the blind musician-devotee stopped 'singing and the spell was broken, Jamnalal asked him how he was doing. He gratefully replied that he was doing wonderfully well because Jamnalal had fulfilled all his desires by accommodating him there and allowing him to sing devotional songs to his heart's content.

Raihana has narrated another incident. Jamnalal had in his employ a person called Ramadin, who drove his horse-carriage. He was a simple rustic. Once Jamnalal had been placed under arrest during the national movement and was being taken to an outstation jail by the police. They were waiting at the Wardha railway station to catch a train. A number of people, big and small, had gathered there to see him off. Poor Ramadin was standing aside in a corner with a gloomy face. Jamnalal noticed him, and, pushing through the crowd, walked up to him. He cheered him up telling him not to worry as he would soon be back. He had read the agony of Ramadin's heart and thought it necessary to console the humble man who was so visibly dejected because of his master's arrest.

Jamnalal once paid a visit to the Rewari Ashram on the outskirts of Rajasthan. A few workers were busy digging a tank for storing water. Jamnalal joined them and began to dig earth with a pickaxe and throw it off with a shovel. After some time he went to the well nearby and began to draw water for the workers to bathe. The workers begged him not to

take the trouble, but he would not listen. He insisted that, as they were already exhausted by their hard work he would keep water ready for them for a refreshing bath.

Fearlessness was an attribute of Jamnalal's ever since he was a child. That trait was further developed when he came in contact with Gandhiji. One glimpse of this is to be had in his early life. In 1912, the Chief Commissioner of C.P. and Berar invited him to attend a levee. A directive was sent round that every one must attend in English costume. Jamnalal declined to comply with it. He would rather stay away from the ceremony, if necessary. The authorities had subsequently to relent and inform him that he was free to dress as he liked, and then he went to the levee in his Marwadi national dress. This reminds us of Tilak's insistence on sticking to his dress while he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council and Gandhiji's remaining a "naked fakir" while going to call on King George V during his visit to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference.

On another occasion the Chief Commissioner was to pay a visit to Wardha and it was in the fitness of things that Jamnalal, as the leading citizen of Wardha, should entertain him at a dinner party. He was quite willing to do so but he made it quite clear to the Deputy Commissioner of Wardha that he would not be able to serve eggs, meat and liquor at the party according to the usual custom, and the Deputy Commissioner had to agree to this.

When the late Mr. E. S. Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India, was visiting India, a deputation of *Sanatani* Hindus headed by the Maharaja

of Darbhanga was to wait upon him. The Maharaja requested Jamnalal to join the deputation. Jamnalal expressed his willingness to do so on the condition that the deputation should demand a ban on the killing of cows to provide meat to the Army. The Maharaja did not have the courage to do this and so Jamnalal did not join the deputation. The Maharaja of Burdwan requested Jamnalal to join a similar deputation on behalf of the Zamindars of India. Jamnalal made the same condition, which was, of course, unacceptable to the Maharaja, and Jamnalal kept himself aloof from this deputation as well.

A book by Pandit Sundarlal, called *Bharatmen Angrezi Raj*, was proscribed by the Government. The police suspected that there must be some copies of the book in Jamnalal's house or library. They came to tell Jamnalal that he should surrender whatever copies he had in his possession. He had none with him at the time and he told them so, but they would not believe him. They vigorously searched his house and had ultimately to concede that there was not a single copy in his possession. Jamnalal then wrote a letter to the Police Chief of his Province, which shows the stuff he was made of:

“Government behaved in an unjust and irresponsible manner. The search, in particular, was most objectionable, insulting and vindictive. I have read that book and I am of the opinion that it is a commendable and an innocent book. Not only this, but it is a praiseworthy effort at teaching a lesson in non-violence.”

Jamnalal was once travelling by train in a second-class compartment. Travelling in the same compartment was an extremely lazy man, who kept on spitting

on the floor of the carriage, perhaps, because he found the effort to spit out of the window too exhausting! Jamnalal politely requested him not to do so. But he persisted in chewing *pan* and spitting. When he stopped for a while, Jamnalal got up from his seat, cleaned the floor of all the filth, washed his hands and took his seat again. He did not say one word of reprimand. But what he had done was too much for his fellow-passenger. He felt very much ashamed of himself and begged Jamnalal to forgive him. He took a vow not to behave again in the manner he had done.

In 1925, the Congress was divided into two camps: those who wanted to enter the legislatures by contesting elections and those who were opposed to this, called the "No-changers", among whom were Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari and Jamnalal. The Executive Committee of the Wardha District Congress was to be elected. Dr. B. S. Moonje, who was in favour of entering the legislatures, was the President of the Nagpur Pradesh Congress Committee. It was alleged that his supporters had enlisted a number of illegal members with a view to capturing the Wardha District Congress Committee. Those belonging to Jamnalal's group also resorted to the same tactics to defeat their opponents. When Jamnalal, who was then in Bombay, came to know of this after his return to Wardha, he felt very unhappy. He presided over the meeting called to conduct the elections, and he could clearly see that the majority was on his side. But, as soon as the proceedings commenced, he announced that his supporters would not participate in the elections because untruth had prevailed in the whole affair. He would rather allow

the Congress Committee of his district to be captured by the opponents than come to power by untruthful and unclean methods.

As Jamnalal was brought up in Maharashtra ever since he was a child he regarded himself as a Mahratta. He spoke Marathi as if it was his mother tongue. He used to say, "I was born a State subject in Rajasthan and my business is chiefly in Bombay, but I belong to Maharashtra."

In a letter written to Haribhau Phatak of Poona, he said:

"I have a feeling of kinship with Maharashtra and the Mahrattas. I have spent the whole of my life in the neighbourhood of Nagpur and whatever little service I might have rendered to the people was also rendered in this area. I am proud of this land and I take a special delight in calling myself a Mahratta. What I consider to be in the best interests of the young men, whether from Maharashtra or other places, I shall try to do. I do not believe in pleasing them by wrong methods just to win them over somehow or other. If I work for them honestly in the right spirit, whatever misunderstandings they may have about me will automatically vanish."

The occasion for writing this letter arose as described hereafter. Haribhau had recommended a certain young man for being taken up in Jamnalal's office, but later he proved to be a dishonest person. Haribhau blamed himself for it. Jamnalal, however, absolved him of any direct or indirect reproach in the matter, as he knew that Haribhau would not have recommended this young man if he had known of his true character.

Even before Jamnalal came into prominence as an all-India leader, Lokamanya Tilak had judged his character correctly from his slight acquaintance with him. Rishabhadas Ranka, a young man of seventeen at the time, went to see the Lokamanya and told him that although he had a rather poor education and was engaged in trade, he wanted to live with Tilak for the service of the country. The Lokamanya advised him, "You can serve the country even while you are engaged in trade. For this purpose it is much better that you should join Seth Jamnalal Bajaj of Wardha. He is a great businessman and a patriot. He was here in Poona a few days back and received a great ovation. Keep him as an ideal before you and you will achieve your objective."

Tilak's paper, the *Kesari*, then edited by the late N. C. Kelkar, had also paid a glowing tribute to Jamnalal in 1923 on his achievement in connection with the Flag Satyagraha at Nagpur. On July 17, the *Kesari* wrote, "There is no doubt that the principal leader of the Nagpur Jhanda Satyagraha, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, has set an excellent example by his courageous behaviour to the whole of the Indian business community. He proudly calls himself Mahatma Gandhi's fifth son; he has undoubtedly followed his 'father' in an appropriate manner."

Jamnalal wanted the Congress programme of work as sponsored by Gandhiji to be popularized and to take root in Maharashtra. He unstintedly helped those who were wedded to this programme. The popularity of the Congress and the success of its programme in Maharashtra in those days under the leadership of men like Shankarrao Deo and N. V. Gadgil was not a little due to Jamnalal's active

encouragement. Even before that he had helped many deserving institutions in Maharashtra generously. One of them was the Pathashala at Chinchwad to which he gave a donation of Rs. 15,000. Yet, it cannot be denied that a section of opinion in Maharashtra was anti-Congress and anti-Gandhi and a section of the press was even mischievous in their criticism.

From Nagpur was published a Marathi journal called *Savadhan*. In its issue dated July 7, 1936, it made some untrue and malicious allegations against Jamnalal. In brief, it said, Jamnalal was serving only his selfish interests under the cloak of patriotism and generosity; no proper gift deed had been made of Maganwadi which was said to have been made over by him to the All-India Village Industries Association and hence when the Association ceased to function, the whole of Maganwadi with its new buildings would revert to Bachhraj & Company which was constituted of Seth Jamnalal, his wife and his sons. Defamatory articles on these lines had been appearing in this journal from time to time for about a year, but Jamnalal had paid no attention to them. However, Gandhiji advised him that it would be desirable to bring the editor of the paper to book by filing a libel suit against him because it was not only Jamnalal who was being attacked individually, but harm was being done also to national institutions and national work.

Jamnalal followed this advice and filed a suit against R. B. Mavkar, the editor of *Savadhan*. The Magistrate of Wardha delivering judgment on November 25, 1938, found Mavkar guilty and sentenced him to six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1000. It was also ordered that Rs. 250 out of the

fine, if recovered, should be paid to the complainant. The defendant went in appeal to the Sessions Court, but the conviction was confirmed on July 13, 1939. The Judge said in his judgment that the writings under consideration were full of inaccurate statements and were, besides, unfair and malicious. However, he reduced the fine to Rs. 500, of which Rs. 100 were ordered to be paid to the plaintiff.

Another Marathi journal called *Chitra* published from Bombay once carried an article by one Jayawant of Nagpur headed: "The Europe that Jamnalal Conquered". It was full of libellous statements. It alleged that Segaon which was worth Rs. 40,000 was gulped by Jamnalal for only Rs. 4,000; that since he had become treasurer of the Congress organization ample money had come in his possession which he gave to other people on interest and pocketed the profits. Jamnalal filed a libel suit against A. A. Kanekar and M. G. Rangnekar, the editor and publisher of the journal, and Jayawant, the writer of the article. Rangnekar and Kanekar tendered an unconditional apology which was accepted. The Magistrate sentenced Jayawant to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 500.

Although such pin-pricks were frequently coming from those who happened to be Mahrattas, Jamnalal was not prejudiced against Mahrattas as such. How could he, when Vinoba, a Mahratta, was his family preceptor and his constant guide? Jamnalal also loved the writings of Tukaram, Ekanath and Ramdas, and he knew by heart many of their poems. While he was in jail in 1941, he read the novels of Hari Narayan Apte and V. S. Khandekar and he was much impressed specially by Khandekar's books.

During the Mulshi Satyagraha days his sympathies were entirely with the peasants who were being uprooted from their lands to make room for the new electric power lines that were being set up by the Tatas. His immediate reaction was such that he sold away all the shares he held in the Tata concerns which meant a great monetary sacrifice.

Being a genuine social reformer, he was very much against the wasteful practices connected with Hindu weddings, the show and pomp which often got the families into debts. He had raised his voice against this in social conferences, and when it came to action he conformed to his professed views in his personal life. All the marriages of his sons and daughters were solemnized in a very simple manner as if they had hailed from the humblest of families. He wanted thereby to set an example to others. When it was decided that Kamala, his eldest daughter, should be married to Rameshwarprasad Nevatia, many of the relatives and friends of both the families naturally expected that there would be a great deal of pomp and pageantry. But Jamnalal decided in consultation with Keshavdeo Nevatia, the boy's uncle, who was also a man of advanced views on social reform, that the marriage should be solemnized neither in Bombay nor at Wardha, but at the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. Accordingly, it was solemnized in all simplicity at the Ashram on February 26, 1926, in the presence of Gandhiji. He showed exemplary courage in doing away with the traditional dinners, bands, musical entertainments, nautch parties, illuminations, and all that. The only important feature of the wedding was Mahatma Gandhi's blessings to the couple, which he gave in an ample measure. He

said, "May the bride and bridegroom live long and add to the good name of their forbears. May they serve the country and perform their duties well."

In 1941, Jamnalal celebrated his 53rd birthday in a solemn though somewhat strange manner. He decided to observe complete silence during the five days that separated his birthday according to the Hindu and the Gregorian calendars. He took only milk and fruit for food. He stayed in the cottage known as Jamnakutir on the banks of the Paunar river near Wardha. Vinoba had purified it by his residence there and so he considered that as the best place for self-introspection.

During his whole life Jamnalal often keenly felt the need for motherly love. It is true that he had two mothers instead of one. But his natural mother was unable to provide him intellectual and spiritual guidance, and the adopted mother did not live long after his adoption. He had acquired a spiritual father in Gandhiji, but his wish for a spiritual mother was unfulfilled. After his release from jail in 1941, Gandhiji insisted on his going to Simla for a change of climate to improve his health, which was shattered during his incarceration. From there Jamnalal wrote in one of his letters to Gandhiji what he felt about the need for a spiritual mother, in whose lap he could rest his head in peace and who would satisfy his hunger for knowledge. Gandhiji replied to him jocularly that it would be difficult to find a mother big enough to take a hefty person like him in her lap. All the same, Gandhiji told him to pay a visit to Dchra Dun on his way back and meet Mata Anandmayi, a saintly woman, living there who had been the Guru of Kamala Nehru.

Accordingly, Jamnalal stopped at Dehra Dun. He was highly pleased with the quiet and delightful atmosphere of the place. When he met Mata Anandmayi he felt he was in the presence of his long cherished spiritual mother. He spent some days there in complete mental peace and happiness. In the spirit of a seeker after knowledge and truth he enquired from her about life's problems and the path he should follow for his spiritual uplift.

After a stay of fifteen days at the place, on the day of his departure, he enquired from Mataji whether she could give him some indication of the time of his death. At first she would not say anything, but after a great deal of pressure she told him that one should be prepared to leave this world at any moment and he could work and arrange his affairs in such a way as if the time of his departure was only six months ahead.

Even from a very young age Jamnalal had adopted a motto that since one has to pass away from this world some day, one should always strive to do good during the span of life allotted to one, and he had been trying his best to put this into practice. Therefore, Mataji's warning, instead of disheartening him, only intensified his desire for doing more good during the few days remaining to him. In the manner of the born businessman that he was, he reflected, "If I have to pass away in six months well and good; but supposing I live longer, I shall be accumulating more good deeds if I make a start right now."

But before deciding on his future course of action he wanted to consult Gandhiji. Had he served his full term of imprisonment and not been released from jail earlier on account of ill health, he would have

come out on the 21st of September 1941. According to plan he met Gandhiji at Sevagram on that very day and sought his advice on the various alternatives he had in mind: to offer Satyagraha and court imprisonment once again; to carry on his political and social work in Jaipur State; to live at Paunar or some such place devoting his time to the Charkha and also to meditation and singing of *bhajans* and reading of scriptures; or finally to immerse himself in *Goseva* work. Gandhiji advised him that *Goseva* would be the best for him.

When Kakasaheb Kalelkar heard about this from Jamnalal he was not quite satisfied. He went to Gandhiji and enquired from him why he had specially chosen *Goseva* work for Jamnalal when his guidance and drive could have been better utilized in more important fields like Harijan Seva and *Asprishyata Nivarana*.* Gandhiji explained:

“Do you think I could not have thought of that? I agree with you entirely. But of late Jamnalal has become more and more introspective, and is always thinking of self-purification. He wants to take up some work which will be consistent with his plan of self-purification and spiritual growth. That is why I specially chose *Goseva* work for him, as best suited to his present mood. In this work he will not have to come in contact with men and their affairs and so he will have better opportunities for introspection and the widening of his sympathies.”†

*Removal of untouchability.

† *To a Gandhian Capitalist*, Ed. Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Introduction, p. xix.

The meeting with Mata Anandmayi had been a great inspiration to him. He began to look upon the universe itself as a great mother. He now saw the mother personified in the cow. In the words of Kaka-saheb Kalelkar:

“Earlier, Jamnalalji had shifted from his palatial house in Wārdha to an ordinary bungalow to lead a life of simplicity. Now he got a simple, crude thatched hut built for himself at a cost of about Rs. 250. Its floor was unpaved, hard and uneven. It was bare of all furniture except for a low rough cot for sitting and sleeping. There he went and stayed in the midst of dumb-driven cattle, leading a life of hardship and austerity and spending all his time in contemplation and service of the cow. He was quite happy and contented in the midst of these surroundings when I visited him there.”*

Jamnalal loved constructive, nation-building endeavour of every kind, but *Goseva* appealed to him most. To Gandhiji *Goseva* was a matter of principle, but he also believed that even from the rationalist, and not blindly devotional, point of view, the cow-protection movement was quite important. Improvement of the cow postulated improvement of the human race. *Goseva* implied service of humanity. When the cow's breed improved, agriculture improved and thereby man got better food. Besides, there was no better and more wholesome food for man than cow's milk, especially in a country like India with a large population of strict vegetarians. When all this was

**Ibid.*, p. xix.

taken into account, service of the cow became incumbent on all alike.

As said elsewhere, Jamnalal did not like the word *Goraksha* and preferred the word *Goseva* (service of the cow). In the conception of Jamnalal and Gandhiji this meant not only protecting the cow from the butcher's knife, but feeding and looking after her well, and improving her breed generation by generation.

Gandhiji wanted to prevent the slaughter of cattle, but at the same time he did not want that the dry and diseased cattle should become an economic burden on the country. This purpose could be achieved by utilizing the cattle for producing manure while alive, and after they died a natural death, the hide, the bones and horns and even the flesh could be turned into economic use for producing leather, manure and various other useful articles. This would be a profitable source for several cottage industries.

Jamnalal not only fully agreed with Gandhiji, but also believed that the economic aspect of *Goseva* could be visibly demonstrated to the people. Having decided to devote himself to this work, he put all his heart and soul into it, and proceeded in a business-like manner to give body and shape to his ideas, as he had done earlier with Khadi and village industries, Hindi propaganda and other nation-building activities.

Living in his hut at Gopuri, he began to personally tend the cows, bathing them, keeping the surroundings clean, feeding them and looking after the milking and other daily chores. He also studied modern methods of rearing cattle and enjoined on all *Goseva* workers to do likewise.

He knew that until cattle-rearing became an economically paying proposition, *Goseva* work would be a failure. A lot of money and energy was wasted by the many cow-protection societies and *pinjrapoles* all over the country by overlooking this fundamental principle. With a view to propagating his ideas on *Goseva* to such institutions he became the President of the Gorakshini Sabha of Wardha, and within a short time he was able to put his ideas into practice.

But not satisfied with this, he organized an All-India Goseva Conference which was attended by delegates and experts from all over the country. Gandhiji presided over the conference and Vinoba inaugurated it. Jamnalal was able to persuade a renowned animal husbandry expert Sir Datar Singh to attend the conference and give the benefit of his advice to the workers who had gathered there. Jamnalal has noted down in his diary that the conference was a great success. It concluded on the 4th of February 1941, a few days before his death. The All-India Goseva Sangh was established as a result of its deliberations, and Jamnalal was elected its first President. This was Jamnalal's last institutional creation.

In a book of reminiscences of Jamnalal* over a hundred eminent contributors from among his friends, colleagues and co-workers, have touched on the various facets of his many-sided personality. Gandhiji's tribute to him finds the pride of place in it. Gandhiji calls Jamnalal his *Kamadhenu*,† the celestial cow which fulfilled every wish of its possessor. President Rajendra Prasad says that he would remain obliged

* *Smarananjali*, *supra*.

† Fulfiller of all desires.

to Jamnalal for ever. Sardar Patel calls him a blood-brother. Kakasaheb Kalelkar calls him a kinsman of one and all. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant calls attention to his completely dedicated life. Sarojini Naidu, Sri Prakasa, Kishorkal Mashruwala, Indira Gandhi, B. G. Kher, Vaikunth Mehta, Haribhau Upadhyaya are among the many contributors. These tributes paid to his memory by those who knew him intimately in his life time conjure up an authentic image of Jamnalal. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "Jamnalal was rather unique in his own way, for many of his kind did not come into the freedom movement with that devotion which he brought to it." Rajagopalachariar's tribute is characteristic. He says: "It is very difficult to write about Jamnalalji. If somebody's father or brother dies, can he write an 'article' about him? If he was some distant acquaintance or a friend, something could have been written. But to write about him is extremely difficult."

CHAPTER X

FAMILY OF PATRIOTS

Among the families of patriots inspired by Gandhiji which risked their all for the freedom movement, the Bajaj family takes the pride of place, another important one of them being the Nehru family. Apart from Jamnalal's own great contribution to the shaping of the policy of the Indian National Congress from 1920 till his death and his participation in the non-co-operation movement and various Satyagraha movement, his wife and children, and even his sister, cousins and nephews joined him; so much so that at times

most of the adult members of his family found themselves behind prison bars in the cause of freedom.

Jamnalal was among the very first of the leading men of the day who renounced their titles when Gandhiji gave the call. He was a Rai Bahadur and an Honorary Magistrate at the time, and voluntarily relinquished both these titles. He was a rich businessman, respected in the highest circles of businessmen like the Tatas and the Birlas as well as in Government quarters. But he was prepared to sacrifice everything for the national cause. His answer to Gandhiji's call was not restricted to any particular item of the non-co-operation movement as was the case with many others who joined that movement. His response was whole-hearted and thorough, and without any reservations.

From the day Gandhiji adopted him as his fifth son, Jamnalal dedicated himself completely to the service of the nation. Gandhiji himself has testified to this:

“Never before, I can say, was a mortal blessed with a ‘son’ like him....He surrendered himself and his without reservation. There is hardly any activity of mine in which I did not receive his full-hearted co-operation and in which it did not prove to be of the greatest value. He was gifted with a quick intelligence. He was a merchant-prince. He placed at my disposal his ample possessions. He became guardian of my time and my health. And he did it all for the public good.”*

These words from Gandhiji reveal the stature of Jamnalal in the public life of the country for

**Harijan*, 22-2-1942, p. 53.

about 25 years from 1919 to 1942, a very crucial period in the history of India's fight for freedom. In the words of Mahadev Desai, "His faith burnt brightest when that of others flickered in times of stress and strain and dark despair."

When Gandhiji accepted Jamnalal as his son, his wife and children became a part of Gandhiji's family and their lives too began to be regulated and shaped by Gandhiji himself. Brought up under the direct paternal care of Gandhiji, they also cultivated the great qualities of discipline, truthfulness and love of humanity. They cheerfully participated in the Satyagraha movements and courted imprisonment and the consequent hardships whenever the occasion demanded.

As early as 1924, Jamnalal took his wife and children to Sabarmati from Wardha, so that they could come under the direct influence of Gandhiji and adapt themselves to the rigours of Ashram life. The children were then very young, the elder son Kamalnayan being only nine. What was quite remarkable was the quick transformation that Janakidevi underwent. Her upbringing and background were contrary to Ashram spirit and discipline; she had been brought up in the perfectly orthodox tradition and, being married in a rich family she was used to a life of ease and luxury, but she readily and cheerfully adjusted herself to the rigours of Ashram life.

For some years Janakidevi and the children continued to stay at Sabarmati, but Kamalnayan was sent to the Wardha Ashram to be in the care of Vinoba. Not only did Janakidevi adapt herself to Sabarmati Ashram life, but she also brought up the children in that atmosphere.

When Gandhiji launched the Salt Satyagraha movement, he had taken a vow that he would not go back to the Sabarmati Ashram till independence was won, and, hence, after the movement was halted he could not return to the Ashram. Jamnalal, who was always eager to have Gandhiji near him, succeeded in persuading Gandhiji to stay at Wardha. In Gandhiji's words:

“It was in deference to Jamnalal's wish that I settled down at Wardha, even at the cost of incurring the mild displeasure of the Sardar. He could easily have got me ten gardens in Gujarat as against the one in Wardha, but I decided to forego those ten gardens because he could not have got me a Jamnalal there.”

Jamnalal's patriotic urge has already been traced back to his childhood days when he sent Rs. 100 out of the savings from his pocket money to Lokamanya Tilak's *Kesari*. As he grew in years he was convinced that foreign domination was the source of most of our ills and shortcomings and he threw himself into the struggle for independence. In 1923 he led the Flag Satyagraha at Nagpur and was sentenced to imprisonment for eighteen months and a fine of Rs. 3,000. In 1930 he organized the Salt Satyagraha campaign in Bombay at the Vile-Parle camp. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. In 1932 he was again placed under arrest and stationed at Visapur, Dhulia, Yeravda and Nasik jails from time to time. In 1939 he broke the Jaipur Durbar order forbidding his entry in the State and was interned for five months. In 1941, when Individual Satyagraha was started, he again courted imprisonment.

During all these five imprisonments, he behaved like a true Satyagrahi. He was tested again and again but stood the tests well. In 1932, he was given hard labour and placed in the worst of jails at Visapur. He was also given "C" class when even according to the Government's own standard he should have been given "A" class. He not only manfully and ungrudgingly put up with all the hardships but actually welcomed the opportunity to experience the rigours of "C" class imprisonment as a training in discipline. He was happy in the company of his fellow Satyagrahis, and gained, in his own words, "considerable mental peace". He was later transferred to Dhulia jail. Friends in Dhulia somehow got advance information of his transfer and a number of people gathered at the railway station to receive him. They saw him get down from a third class compartment, clad in the usual jail clothes of a convict—half pants, *kurta* and cap. Tears welled up in their eyes. The police officer in attendance told Jamnalal that he could put on his private clothes but he declined to do so. In the same dress he went to the passengers' waiting room and met his friends. An offer was made to him by the police officer that he could go in a car from the station to the jail, but he declined that too and walked the one-mile distance.

The Superintendent of Dhulia Jail was apparently not aware that Jamnalal was being transferred. But Vinoba who was jailed there at the time had come to know about it, and when Jamnalal did not arrive even after the expected time, Vinoba asked the Jailer about it. But he knew nothing. While an inquiry was going on as to how this news had reached Vinoba, Jamnalal was actually at the gate of the jail. It was

found out that one of the jail servants had carried the news to Vinoba. Disciplinary action was contemplated against him, but both Vinoba and Jamnalal intervened and he was let off. Vinoba was in the "B" class. The Government was ready to place Jamnalal in the same class if he made a representation, but he declined to apply for any concession.

The letter that Jamnalal addressed to the Government of Bombay on that occasion is a testimony to his principled conduct and magnanimity. In the course of the letter dated April 7, 1932, he said:

"Most of those convicted for civil disobedience have been placed in "C" class. They are not given even the rudimentary amenities that are considered necessary for civilized human existence. This is great injustice. I am firmly of the opinion that every prisoner must be treated as a human being; therefore, I do not wish to be transferred to an upper class. Government has resorted to unnecessary discrimination between one class of prisoners and another. It seems to be the intention of Government to give facilities to a few and conceal the hardships inflicted on most "C" class prisoners. I prefer, therefore, to remain in "C" class."

During those days Government used to spend only one anna and a half per day over every "C" class prisoner. One can imagine what kind of diet the prisoners would get for that paltry allowance. But Jamnalal never complained. He went about his work quietly and ungrudgingly. But his body had to suffer the effects. His health was considerably undermined and his weight went down continuously. The Jailer of his own accord then began to serve him rice,

wheaten bread and carrots. He also allowed him to get butter from outside. Jamnalal was given the further concession to receive his mail.

One day, Jamnalal took a little more time than usual in looking up his mail. His activities were varied and some of them required close attention and pondering over. But the Jailor did not understand this. He insulted Jamnalal by reminding him that so many concessions had been given to him voluntarily but apparently even these were considered by him as not enough. Jamnalal was deeply pained at this, but he did not blame the Jailor. On the contrary, he felt that he had made a mistake in taking advantage of the concessions that were given to him. He decided that thereafter he would not avail himself of them and would strictly conform to the jail rules as they were. He immediately stopped having butter from outside.

While he was in this jail, in the month of April water became scarce. Jamnalal suggested to the Jailor that the well in the jail compound might be uncovered and water supplied to all. The Jailor asked: "Who will draw the water from the well?" Jamnalal replied, he and his friends would do it. And so they worked on the water-wheel to draw water and played the role of bullocks! The Jailor was amazed. He had the scene photographed and preserved, and his respect for his prisoners, of course, rose very high.

When Jamnalal's old mother and Janakidevi went to meet him in jail, they saw him in the dress of a "C" class prisoner with his emaciated body. His aged mother began to shed tears, but he consoled her to be brave.

When Jamnalal was lodged in the jail, his weight had gone down by 40 lbs. There were interpellations

about it in the Bombay Legislative Council, and as a result, he was transferred to Yeravda jail where he was better looked after. But he greatly missed here what he had 'enjoyed' in Dhulia jail. More than all he had in Dhulia Vinoba's company and an opportunity to hear his Gita discourses.

Jamnalal was put to two severe tests while he was in Dhulia jail. One arose out of a message he received from Rameshwardas Birla saying that their sugar factory was facing closure because the Government refused to grant the permit for obtaining sulphur which was indispensable for running it. Jamnalal was one of the directors of this sugar company, and he was working against the Government; but if he gave an undertaking in writing to the Government that he would not use the sulphur for the manufacture of gunpowder, the permit would be granted. Jamnalal felt this was an unjust and unreasonable demand meant to insult and humiliate him. Knowing full well that he was wedded to non-violence as a creed, and not merely as policy, how could the Government ascribe to him even the remotest intention of manufacturing gunpowder? He, therefore, flatly refused to give any undertaking and was prepared to face the closure of the factory. When, later, the question was taken up in the Central Legislative Assembly, Government quietly replied that the permit would be given.

The other test concerned his cherished garden in Wardha, Maganwadi as it came to be known later. The Government had taken possession of the garden, but there was none to look after the watering and tending of the trees and shrubs there. The garden was slowly withering away. The Government informed Jamnalal

that if he wanted to maintain the garden at his cost, they had no objection. Jamnalal would not take a concession like that. He said he regarded the garden as burned to cinders and he would not have any of his men to set foot there, as long as it was in the possession of the Government.

Even before Gandhiji settled down at Wardha, and later at Sevagram, Jamnalal had established several institutions there. After Gandhiji shifted his headquarters there, Wardha not only became the "political capital" of India, but the centre of all constructive activities and the several institutions connected with them. It became a place of national pilgrimage. Sevagram, Parandham, Gopuri, Nalwadi, Maganwadi, and Kakawadi, Navabharat Vidyalaya, G. S. College of Commerce, Mahilashram, Harijan Hostel, Charmalaya and Leper Service Home were among the centres and institutions established for promoting village industries, Khadi, Hindi propaganda, Basic Education, education for girls, Harijan work and other activities. Jamnalal not only spent money lavishly for their establishment and upkeep, but also devoted a good deal of his time and energy to look after their proper working.

There is no account of Jamnalal's unrecorded charities, but if only those that are recorded are taken into consideration, the total comes to nearly 25 lakhs of rupees. The causes which he helped were as wide as they were varied. Some of the more important of his donations might be cited here: Gandhi Seva Sangh, Rs. 2.5 lakhs; Tilak Swaraj Fund, Rs. 2 lakhs; All-India Village Industries Association, Rs. 1,30,000; Marwadi Shiksha Mandal, Wardha, Rs. 80,000; Satyagrahashram, Wardha, Rs. 1,00,000; Sabarmati

Ashram, Rs. 35,000; Marwadi Agarwal Mahasabha, Rs. 61,000; Banaras Hindu University, Rs. 51,000; Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose's Science Institute, Rs. 35,000; Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad, Rs. 21,000; scholarships to Muslim students, Rs. 21,000; Gurukul Kangri, Rs. 18,000; Nagpur Flag Satyagraha, Rs. 10,000; Nagpur Congress Session, Rs. 10,000; Nasik Kumbha Mela Seva Samiti, Rs. 10,000; *Rajasthan Kesari*, Rs. 10,000. Apart from this, he spent large sums for Hindi Prachar, removal of untouchability and various other items of the constructive programme, and toured over the country extensively many times over at his own expense for propagating the Congress ideals and programme.

Among some more institutions which benefited by his donations were the Vaidyak Samshodhan Sanstha of Calcutta; Deshi Rajya Parishad of Bombay; Kamla Nehru Smarak Nidhi of Allahabad; Mata Anandmayi Trust of Dehra Dun; Quetta Earthquake Relief Fund; Maharashtra Seva Sangh; and Shantiniketan of Rabindranath Tagore.

The Bajaj Brothers donated a sum of Rs. 10,00,000 to the University of Bombay on behalf of the Jamnalal Seva Trust on the 20th anniversary of Jamnalal, i.e. on 11th February 1926, for the establishment of an Institute of Management studies. There is no other condition attached to the gift.

It is difficult to make an estimate of the help that he gave to fellow businessmen in difficulty, both directly and indirectly. Similarly, it is not possible to assess how much help he secured for the national movement and other worthy causes from the business community by his personal example and inspiration, but it will certainly run into crores of rupees.

Jamnalal had inherited about four lakhs of rupees from his grandfather but he multiplied this several times over in his business. But having once given up all, his claims over the property of his grandfather in the letter, that he had written to him at the age of seventeen, to which reference has been made earlier, Jamnalal felt that he had no moral right to enjoy the wealth he had once renounced. Therefore, throughout his life he treated his wealth as a trust to be expended for the public good. Not satisfied with this, he is said to have evaluated the wealth he had inherited from his grandfather with compound interest thereon and earmarked the entire amount for charity. This he did more than once!

As a matter of fact, Jamnalal was also prepared to give up his all, but Gandhiji restrained him from doing so. After his demise, his wife gave over her entire personal property and jewellery valued at Rs. 2.5 lakhs for the service of the cow. His sons, Kamalnayan and Ramkrishna created the Shri Jamnalal Seva Trust for charity out of half of his property with Gandhiji's advice and blessings.

A sum of about Rs. 20,000 was spent every year in running the Guest House in Bajajwadi at Wardha, where national leaders and other guests used to stay all the year round. The sum spent on this hospitality during Jamnalal's lifetime was over 2.5 lakhs of rupees. The hospitality at Bajajwadi continues to this day.

Very often so many guests used to be there that Jamnalal and his family had no rooms left to themselves and they used to sleep in the courtyard. The needs of the guests were paramount. Jamnalal personally used to supervise every minute detail, in spite

of his preoccupation with other important matters. On one occasion, 78 guests from 27 different countries had to be entertained there and for that purpose 42 different vegetarian dishes had to be prepared according to their tastes and requirements.

Jamnalal's wife Janakidevi followed in the footsteps of her husband. Brought up, as she was, in a rich and orthodox family, it was a little difficult for her in the earlier stages to adjust herself to the new life of simplicity required of her, but once she got over her initial hesitation and reluctance, she became more enthusiastic than even her husband for national work, especially the constructive programme. Reference has been made earlier of an instance, when she rebelled against the very idea of Jamnalal, a devotee of the spinning wheel, buying a textile mill. She took to Khaddar in 1920 and has stuck to it all these years. In Gandhiji's Ashram, she worked for years like any other ordinary woman. Though brought up in the orthodox Hindu tradition, she did not hesitate to rub shoulders with Harijans or even to take food at their hands. She indefatigably carried on propaganda against the purdah system and child-marriage when she saw that they were real curses to society.

During the Salt Satyagraha days, she joined the movement with enthusiasm and toured Bengal and Bihar, carrying on a campaign against foreign cloth and for popularizing the Khaddar cult. In 1932, she was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and kept in Nagpur jail. She was placed in "A" class but she demanded that she be placed in "B" class, because most of her Ashram friends were in that class. She availed of her enforced leisure in jail to study Hindi. In her delightful book, *Meri Jeevanyatra*, she has

narrated the story of her life in simple and touching words.

Janakidevi's real trial came in 1942, when Jamnalal suddenly passed away. She wanted to become a *sati* by immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre, but Gandhiji dissuaded her from such a course of action by pointing out that she would become a true *sati* by dedicating herself to the work which Jamnalalji did during his lifetime. So, she decided to dedicate herself to the service of the cow. She gave away her entire wealth to the Goseva Sangh. Later, she was elected as the President of the Sangh in place of Jamnalal.

She is the President of the Wardha Mahila-shram, which was originally started by Jamnalal to provide education to young women, particularly the daughters of those who had participated in the national movements, and is even now imparting education to girls to suit their special needs. She is also a trustee of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust and a member of the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Being a disciple and a devotee of Vinoba, she joined him in his Bhoodan campaign in 1951 while he was on his walking tour in Telangana. With her native shrewdness she realized that the lands donated for Bhoodan would be useless unless there was water for irrigating the fields. So she started a campaign for *Koopadan* to supplement Bhoodan. She was elected as President of the Mahila Sammelan which was held at the time of the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Chandil in 1953. In her presidential speech she said:

“Gandhiji had taught me to give up love of gold and jewellery long ago. Now, Vinoba is

teaching everybody to give up love of money, wealth. He is finding land for the landless, but if the land is not watered, what can grow upon it? Watered land will at least grow grass and cattle could be fed on it. So, my appeal to my sisters is that they should contribute for 'sinking a well in every field. When Vinoba pays a visit to our Sammelan it will be much better if, instead of offering him garlands of yarn, we can offer him our gold necklaces for this purpose."

Janakidevi's words had a magic effect on her audience. When Vinoba came, the assembled women offered their rings, bangles, necklaces and even *mangalsutras*. He was in possession of 27 tolas of gold in a few minutes. He gave it all to Janakidevi for *Koopadan*. Vinoba liked the idea of *Koopadan* so much that he declared that sufficient money must be found to provide one lakh wells. Janakidevi went from place to place and door to door on her mission. She went first to Gaya and secured enough money for 100 wells; President Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the campaign for digging wells on the occasion of the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Gaya in 1954. Janakidevi secured donations from a number of friends, including Jawaharlal Nehru and President Rajendra Prasad himself.

September 11 happens to be Vinoba's birthday, and October 2 is Gandhiji's birthday. Within the intervening period of 21 days, it was Janakidevi's resolve to secure donations for 59 wells, because it was Vinoba's 59th birthday. She completed the target in Delhi alone long before that period ended. So she thought of completing 108 donations instead of 59. She secured 107 by October 2, and just one was less.

She was restless. It was raining hard, and before dusk the 108th donation had not come. At night, she felt ill at ease and could not sleep. Just then, her son-in-law, Shríman Narayan, knocked at her door and informed her that he had secured Rs. 3,000 for six wells. Janakidevi felt relieved that her resolve was carried out.

Later, there was a meeting of the Sarva Seva Sangh at Bankura in Bengal. Janakidevi secured 108 *Koopadans* from only one person, Mohanlal Goenka. In the city of Bombay she secured Rs. 30,000 for 600 wells. An American woman also contributed for one *Koopadan*. The business concerns of the Bajaj family gave donations for ten wells.

During the course of her national work Janakidevi had come to know many persons from all walks of life all over the country. She utilized these contacts for pushing on the work of *Goseva* and *Koopadan*. The award of the *Padma Vibhushan* by the President of India has only increased her zeal for the work, for she feels that she has to prove worthy of the great honour done to her by devoting herself more and more to the service, not only of her fellowmen but also of the dumb cattle.

Kamalnayan, elder son of Jamnalal was not educated in the ordinary schools and colleges. Jamnalal practised what he preached. Having called upon others to boycott Government-aided schools during the non-co-operation days, he would not send his own children to such institutions. He, therefore, put Kamalnayan first in the Sabarmati Ashram under Gandhiji's care, and later, in the Wardha Ashram under Vinoba. What he learnt at their feet, no amount of schooling could have given him. Vinoba gave him not only intellectual but spiritual training as well and

also taught him to pray, to spin, to grind corn, to till the fields, to tend the garden, and to clean the latrines. Later he attended the Gujarat Vidyapeeth at Ahmedabad for some time, and also passed the Visharad Examination of the Prayag Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. He had the good fortune to get some practical lessons in English from a master of English prose, Mahadev Desai, who used to correct his letters written to himself and Gandhiji and return them to him.

Kamalnayan wanted to travel abroad and, if possible, join a British University to absorb the best they could offer. Though Jamnalal was not very much in favour of this, Gandhiji advised him that it would be a good thing. Accordingly, Kamalnayan was sent to Ceylon for a year's schooling and later to England, where he passed the Matriculation examination of the Dublin University and joined the Economics Tripos at Cambridge University. He also started putting terms at the Inner Temple for the Bar examination. But the Second World War broke out in the meantime and so he returned to India.

Even before his trip to England, his training in the field of Satyagraha had started in the family tradition. When he was hardly sixteen he joined Gandhiji's select band of volunteers on his historic Dandi March to break the salt laws. On the way his eyesight was affected. So Gandhiji advised him to spend some time at the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and take nature cure by applying a mud pack to the eyes. After he was well enough, he joined the Satyagraha movement in right earnest. He picketed foreign cloth shops at Ahmedabad. Later he went to Ajmer to organize picketing of liquor shops. There, while picketing a liquor shop at Pushkar during the annual *mela*, he

was severely assaulted by the police that he fell unconscious. He was subsequently arrested at Almora when engaged in similar work and sentenced to hard labour for seven and a half months. As he declined to tell his name and address he was placed in "C" class and was subjected to much ill-treatment in the Hardoi jail.

During the "Quit India" movement of 1942, he somehow escaped arrest although all the other adult members of the family including his wife, were imprisoned. He addressed the public meeting at Shivaji Park in Bombay, in place of Kasturba Gandhi who was arrested, on the fateful 9th August, 1942, which marked the beginning of the movement all over the country. The office of the family concern of Bachhraj & Co. which had been bankers for the Indian National Congress, was raided and searched by the police to see if any secret funds were lying with them, but they could find nothing.

Being outside jail, Kamalnayan actively co-operated with the underground movement, and also helped those who had suffered. He organized legal defence for the hundreds of people who were falsely implicated in the Chimur, Ashti and Wardha sabotage cases and threatened with death sentences. He spent about three lakhs of rupees for all this.

Later on Kamalnayan interested himself in the Indian States' Peoples' movement like his father. He was chosen as a member of the States' sub-committee, appointed by the Congress Working Committee with Shri Shankarrao Deo as Chairman. It was mainly as a result of the report of this sub-committee, that the All-India States' Peoples' Conference were one by one merged with the Provincial Committees of the

Indian National Congress, and later the A.I.S.P. Conference itself was dissolved by merging into the Congress. He was also the treasurer of the All-India States' Peoples' Conference and a member of its Parliamentary Board and many of its sub-committees. He inaugurated the Deccan States' Union, the first States' Union in the country, in 1947, and was later elected President of its Parliamentary Board. In 1948, he was elected treasurer of the Reception Committee of the Jaipur Session of the Congress. He has been a member of the A.I.C.C. for several years. He was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Wardha Constituency in 1917 and again in 1926. He is a trustee of several institutions like the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Gandhi-Vichar Parishad and Gandhi Gyan Mandir. He is treasurer of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindi Parishad, Delhi and the Indian Council for Africa among other organizations, and is connected with several educational institutions as a member of their managing committees.

In business, Kamalnayan as well as Ramkrishna are following the traditions of their father. Kamalnayan is the Chairman and Managing Director of Bachhraj & Company Ltd., and Chairman of the Board of the Mukand Iron & Steel Works, Bajaj Electricals Ltd. and Bajaj Auto. Ltd. He is also a Director of Hindusthan Sugar Mills Ltd., Punjab National Bank Ltd., Delhi Cloth and General Mills Co. Ltd., Orissa Cement Ltd. and several other companies. He is a member of the Managing Committee of the Indian Merchants Chamber, Bombay, and the Rajasthan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jaipur, and ex-President of the latter organization. He is also a member of the Industrial Advisory Committee of the Central and Rajasthan Governments. In all these

capacities he has been taking keen interest in the industrial development of the country.

Kamalnayan went to East Africa in 1950 on an unofficial visit, at the instance of Prime Minister Nehru to study the condition of the Indian settlers in those parts. He went to Russia and Poland in 1954 as a member of the Trade Delegation deputed by the Government of India in response to their invitations. He has extensively toured Europe several times to study the industrial conditions there and to negotiate technical collaboration for our own industrial advancement.

Kamalnayan's wife, Savitridevi, hails from the Podar family of Calcutta. In 1942, she participated in the "Quit India" movement and had experience of jail life at Wardha, Nagpur and Jubbulpore. Later, she graduated from the Tata School of Social Sciences and secured the M.A. degree in Politics of Nagpur University. Her younger sister Vimaladevi, was married to Ramkrishna in 1947. Greatly interested in cultural activities, she is herself a keen student of the fine arts like music, painting and sculpture.

Jamnalal's younger son, Ramkrishna, born on September 22, 1923 spent the first four or five years of his life at Sabarmati. Then he was taken to Wardha. During the Salt Satyagraha movement many national institutions had to close down, and they began to function again only after 1934. In the family tradition, Ramkrishna was not sent to any Government-aided school. He was educated partly at home, privately and partly at the Ashram at Wardha. It was only from 1937, when the Navabharat Vidyalaya was reopened after the Congress Ministries took office in the provinces that he started to attend this national

institution. Even at Wardha he was kept in a students' boarding house in order that he should become self-reliant by living with the other students and experiencing the hardships of hostel life. He was also sent on a tour of South India and Ceylon to gather experience from travel.

He had come up to the Matriculation standard in 1941, when the Individual Satyagraha campaign was in full swing. The national leaders were courting jail one after another. One day Jamnalal's turn came. When he was arrested and was being taken to jail, Ramkrishna followed him and asked for his permission to court imprisonment himself by offering Satyagraha. Jamnalal told him that he had no objection to it, if he secured Gandhiji's consent. This was not a mass movement and Gandhiji himself was picking and choosing each individual Satyagrahi on merits. Vinoba had been the first Satyagrahi so chosen by Gandhiji.

Ramkrishna saw Gandhiji, but he would not agree to a minor offering Satyagraha and going to jail. Ramkrishna had not completed 18 years then. But Ramkrishna persisted in his resolve and insisted on his being allowed to court imprisonment. At last, being convinced of his earnestness, Gandhiji yielded, and decided to make him an exception to his general rule. Every Satyagrahi was expected to give a notice to the authorities intimating the time and place at which he was offering Satyagraha. In Ramkrishna's case Gandhiji himself gave the intimation to the Deputy Commissioner of Wardha. Gandhiji also drafted the contents of the statement to be given by Ramkrishna in court in the event of his being arrested and produced for trial. After writing the statement, Gandhiji called Ramkrishna late at night and explained it to

him sentence by sentence. He also asked him whether he understood the meaning of it fully and whether he wanted any alterations to be made therein.

Ramkrishna offered Satyagraha and was duly placed under arrest on 15th April 1941. When he was placed for trial the Magistrate fined him Rs. 100/-. Two days later, he again offered Satyagraha and was fined Rs. 200/- this time. He persisted again and then was awarded four months' jail. After release from jail he once again offered Satyagraha and was given, this time, six months' imprisonment.

By coincidence he was sent to the Nagpur jail, where Jamnalal and Vinoba had already been lodged. Jamnalal told him that in jail he must strictly observe the jail discipline. In family matters, he should consult him, but in all other matters he must follow Vinoba's advice.

Jamnalal's strictness in observing discipline himself, and in seeing that Ramkrishna did likewise is illustrated by an incident. One of the "A" class prisoners once received a gift of mangoes from his friends outside. He sent one mango to Jamnalal, but he declined it, although he was fond of mangoes and the jail rules permitted him to accept the gift. Thereupon, the friend told him that he might give it to Ramkrishna who was staying with him in the jail. But Jamnalal promptly said that Ramkrishna being a "B" class prisoner, was not entitled to the privilege and hence he should not take it.

Vinoba began to teach Ramkrishna the Valmiki Ramayana and the Gita in the jail. When this became known to the other prisoners, many of them began to attend the discourses, and the jail became Vinoba's Gita class.

In December 1941, Ramkrishna was released from jail. Vinoba had been released earlier and so, he came to receive Ramkrishna at the station.

Jamnalal died on February 11, 1942. But Janakidevi, even in the midst of her profound grief, insisted on Ramkrishna's attending the Commerce College at Wardha from the very next day. As he had got only 48 days of attendance in the first year, he had to obtain special permission to appear for the examination which was at first refused. The Vice-Chancellor of the Nagpur University gave him special permission, later on, when Ramkrishna pointed out to him that on the analogy of the soldiers on active service who were given such exemption from attendance, he too, as a soldier in the fight for independence, should be entitled to the same privilege. In spite of his low attendance, he passed creditably standing sixth among 62 students in his class.

When the "Quit India" movement started in August 1942, with four convictions to his credit, Ramkrishna naturally plunged himself in this new movement with vigour. He was interned in the Nagpur jail for three years. The police subjected him to a great deal of beating before taking him to jail. He bore it all without flinching. He only objected to their using foul language. Gandhiji had enjoined on him in 1939 on his birthday that he must remain true to his father's name. That he tried to do implicitly.

When Ramkrishna first went to jail, he was told by Gandhiji that he might have to spend five years in jail. When he came out in 1945, having spent a total of four and half years, he reminded Gandhiji of his words and offered to spend the balance of six months anywhere for any work according to his

directions. "These six months are yours, and I am entirely at your disposal during this period", he told Gandhiji. So Gandhiji asked him to accompany him in his Madras, Assam and Bengal tours in 1946. Ramkrishna practically became Gandhiji's attendant all the time and did all that was required of him. Gandhiji used to refer to him as his *hamal* and Ramkrishna took pride in the "status" accorded to him. -

Ever since his student days, Ramkrishna has been taking keen interest in the students' and youth movements. He attended a Conference of the International Union of Students at Prague in 1946 as a delegate. He also paid visits to other parts of Europe on the occasion to study the students' and youth movements there. Thereafter, he has visited Europe several times, as well as the U.S.A., Africa and other parts of the world, as the leader of various youth delegations during the last several years. In 1956 he went to Japan as a delegate to the Conference of the International Chambers of Commerce. He has recorded his impressions of Japan in a Hindi book entitled *Japanki Sair*. Early in 1958 he led a delegation of the Indian Youth Congress (I. Y. C.) to the U.S.S.R. on one month's tour. He has written a book entitled *The Young Russia* giving his frank impressions about Russia.

In August 1958, he worked as the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the International Conference the WAY* held in Delhi and inaugurated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He was a leading worker of the Youth Congress but resigned from it in order to be able to work conscientiously in favour of Acharya Kripalani and against Krishna Menon in

* World Assembly of Youth

the General Election from Bombay North in February 1926. As the Youth Congress Chairman, he was elected to be Chairman of the WAY. So he resigned this chairmanship also. Ramkrishna also looks after the family business, and is a Director in several companies. He has been Vice-President of the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Bombay, for many years.

Like his sons, Jamnalal's daughters also have kept up the father's traditions. His eldest daughter Kamala, born in 1912, carried on propaganda for popularizing Khadi and against the purdah system among women during the Salt Satyagraha days in 1930. Her husband, Rameshwar Prasad Nevatia studied at the Gujarat Vidyapeeth. He has made a name for himself as an expert in the sugar industry in the country. He is a former President of the All-India Sugar Mills' Association. He was the leader of the delegation appointed by the Government of India to the World Sugar Technologists Conference in West Indies in 1951. In 1946, he was appointed as the leader of a delegation of the National Productivity Council on Plant Layout which visited many advanced countries of the world, like the U.S.A., Japan and Germany to study their plant layout techniques and methods. In 1951, Rameshwar Prasad was elected to the Lok Sabha from Uttar Pradesh.

Jamnalal's second daughter, Madalasa, born in 1917, had the benefit of the care and guidance of both Gandhiji and Vinoba, at Sevagram and Wardha Ashrams. She underwent all the rigours of Ashram life to learn at the feet of Gandhiji and Vinoba. She is associated with social welfare activities and was connected with the women's section of the A.I.C.C. for a long time. As an ardent disciple of Vinoba, she

joins him frequently in his Bhoodan tours. She acts as a link between Vinoba and the Bhoodan ideology, on the one hand, and the national leaders in office on the other. She declined to stand for election to the Lok Sabha in 1957 when a seat was offered to her by the Congress. She is married to Shriman Narayan.

Shriman Narayan is well known as an authority on basic education and Gandhian economics. It was Jamnalal who drew him to Gandhiji, whose love and respect for him grew with the years. He was first appointed Principal of Navabharat Vidyalyaya, and later of the Commerce College at Wardha. He is the author of books on several topics like Gandhian economics, basic education and the Indian constitution, apart from a few volumes of poems in Hindi, all of which were highly commended by Gandhiji himself. His latest book is *Principles of Gandhian Planning* with a Foreword by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. He was General Secretary of the Congress for a number of years, and was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1951. He is at present a Member of the Planning Commission. He was in jail for 18 months during the "Quit India" movement.

Jamnalal's third daughter, Uma *alias* Om, born in 1919, was educated at Sabarmati and Vinoba's Kanyashram. The correspondence between her and Gandhiji reveals her mischievous and playful nature, which Gandhiji reciprocated in some measure in his indulgence for his young "grand-child", but at the same time Gandhiji was strict and severe when occasion demanded it. As a young girl she travelled all over India with Gandhiji during his famous Harijan tour in 1934. She went to jail in 1942. She is married to Raj Narayan Agarwal of Delhi. She takes special

interest in the work of the Social Welfare Board, and is also the Delhi representative of the Kasturba Gandhi Trust.

Jamnalal's nephew Radhakrishna was to him just like his sons. He was sentenced to imprisonment in 1932 for six months, which he spent in Akola, Seoni and Nagpur jails. In 1942, he was accused of conspiracy against the British Raj. The case was so serious that there was every possibility of his being sentenced to death. However, ultimately he was awarded three years' hard labour. Radhakrishna has been specially interested in the constructive programme, and more particularly in *Goseva* work. He was President of the Nalavadi Grama Seva Mandal. He is now a whole time Bhoodan worker and an old member of the executive of the Sarva Seva Sangh. At present he is in charge of their publications.

Jamnalal's sister and many other relations, and even his staff and servants followed his example. His influence was spontaneous. He did not ask anybody to do anything against his or her will just to please him. His example proved so effective because he himself was so sincere, straightforward and honest in whatever he did. He spread the contagion of service and sacrifice among the people with whom he came into close and intimate contact.

CHAPTER XI

SUDDEN PASSING AWAY

The death of Jamnalal Bajaj came so suddenly on February 11, 1942 that everyone concerned could not believe that such a thing had happened at all.

Generalissimo Chang-kai-shek was to come to Wardha shortly and so Jamnalal was making preparations for his reception and stay. The previous night he had a long talk with Mahadev Desai during which both of them had exchanged pleasantries regarding the impending visit. Jamnalal had said, "Bapu wants me to devote myself to *Goseva*, but how can I do so when such tasks keep on coming?" Mahadev Desai retorted, "It is you who wants to entertain as your guest one of the world's great men, and at the same time to devote yourself to service of the cow! How can that be?" Jamnalal replied to this, "The world's greatest man has already become my permanent guest. Is that not enough for me?" He proceeded to say that he would be going to Gopuri. Mahadevbhai jocularly remarked, "Now that your honoured guest is coming, you will have to leave Gopuri for a few days, and go to Janakipuri." Jamnalal at once replied, "Gopuri has also now become Janakipuri, because Janakidevi has come to stay here." The conversation had proceeded on these lines for quite some time, and even the next day early in the morning. He had once again enquired from Mahadevbhai whether there was any further news about the arrival of Chang-kai-shek.

The mirth and laughter of the previous night suddenly changed to gloom and tears on the next day. Gandhiji was in conference with Ghanashyamdas Birla

in his cottage at Sevagram, when he was informed that Jamnalal had a sudden bout of high blood pressure and vomiting and he had become unconscious. In the meantime, a motor car also arrived at Sevagram to fetch the medicine which Gandhiji usually took for high blood pressure as the doctors had called for it. Gandhiji, accompanied by Birla, immediately started for Wardha with the medicine. As if by a premonition Gandhiji remarked, "It would be, indeed, a great calamity if we do not find him alive." But with his usual optimism he proceeded to say that in all likelihood they would find him in his normal playful and joyous mood.

But God had willed it otherwise. Before Gandhiji reached Wardha, Jamnalal had passed away. He was just 52 and was apparently in good health. The feeling of shock caused by his death was therefore, universal. No one could believe that such a thing had happened. Gandhiji, Vinoba, Jamnalal's eighty-year old mother, Birdibai and Janakidevi were all stunned at its suddenness.

When the question of the place of cremation of the last remains was considered, Gandhiji suggested 'Gopuri' itself, which was the scene of his last activity, *Goseva*. The whole population of Wardha collected at Gopuri to pay their last respects to one whom they had come to regard as their father.

The body was cremated in Gopuri to the accompaniment of Vedic *mantras* recited by Vinoba and Parchure Shastri and quotations from Koran recited by Amtul Salam. Thereafter, at Gandhiji's request, Vinoba recited the whole of Ishopanishad and the ninth canto of the Gita. That was followed by an *abhang* of Tukaram and lastly *Vaishnava jana to tene kahiye*,

Gandhiji's favourite *bhajan*. Parchure Shastri explained the meaning of the Vedic *mantras* he had recited. "The flame of life that was confined within the bounds of Jamnalalji's body has now merged itself in the boundless universal flame. . . . His transitory body was of the earth, and has become one with the earth; that which was permanent in him, but was confined within the limits of his earthly body, has now been liberated so that we all may share it."

Gandhiji was deeply moved, but as the eldest male member of the family he considered it his duty to console Jamnalal's aged mother and wife. Janakidevi insisted on immolating herself on Jamnalal's funeral pyre to become a *sati*. She was mad with grief. But Gandhiji told her firmly, "Do not think that people will worship you if you become a *sati* like this. On the contrary, you will become a subject of idle talk. Yes, if you can produce an internal flame to consume your body to ashes, you will become a true *sati*. But that is not possible. You can, therefore, become a true *sati* by renouncing everything and becoming a *Yogini*."

Janakidevi was impressed by Gandhiji's counsel. Ghanashyamdas, who was standing nearby, then pointed out that it was usual on such occasions to take some solemn vow. Before Gandhiji could say anything, Janakidevi herself voluntarily offered to take a vow to hand over her entire property to be utilized for Jamnalal's incomplete work, *Goseva*. But Gandhiji was not satisfied with this. Even in this tragic situation, his sense of humour did not desert him. He said, "Even after sacrificing all your earthly possessions and becoming a beggar, it is easy enough for you to stay with your children who will feed you, or, if they

refuse, to take shelter at Sevagram to partake of my beggar's bowl and share my poverty. But that will not do. You must dedicate yourself completely to fulfil Jamnalal's mission." Janakidevi wondered whether God would give her the strength to do all this. Vinoba assured her that where there was the will to do good, God always gave the strength to fulfil the task.

But, while Gandhiji consoled and gave courage to the members of the family, he himself was restless. He could not sleep a wink that night. The whole of Jamnalal's career unfolded itself before his mind's eye. He was the man who had asked Gandhiji to regard him as his fifth son; he was the fifth son who had not only shouldered the financial responsibility for all of Gandhiji's activities but also ideologically identified himself with everyone of them; he was Gandhiji's *Kamadhenu*; in any difficulty, he was Gandhiji's prop and Gandhiji felt crippled without him. But Gandhiji was a Karmayogi, a *Sthitaprajna*, in the language of the Gita, and he tried to bear the great loss with equanimity.

Two days later, Gandhiji called together all the members of the family and addressed them all regarding their duties. Jamnalal's elder son, Kamalnayan, had arrived that very day from Uttar Pradesh, where he had gone to see their sugar mill. He had rushed back to Wardha on hearing the tragic news. Addressing him Gandhiji said:

"According to the Hindu tradition, the eldest son, no doubt, inherits a share in the father's property like the younger ones, but at the same time he becomes the custodian of the family traditions, as well as a follower of his father's good deeds and principles. Hence, if you wish to carry

on his business and earn money, you are welcome to do so. But, like your father, you must also do it by righteous and legitimate means, and act as a trustee of what you earn. Only if you spend your earnings in the service of the people and not for selfish ends, will your trusteeship stand justified.” •

Patting young Ramkrishna on his back, Gandhiji observed that he expected of him to dedicate himself for service and for the completion and fulfilment of Jamnalal's unfinished work. There was no compulsion on him. Only if he had the courage to take a vow, he could do so. God would certainly give him the strength to carry out his resolve. To Radhakrishna, Jamnalal's nephew, Gandhiji said that he should help Janakidevi to fulfil the vow she had taken of starting her work of *Goseva*. Lastly, addressing Jamnalal's three daughters he said:

“Whatever I have told Kamalnayan and Ramkrishna applies equally to you. I expect you too to sacrifice according to your capacities. Remember that whatever Jamnalal had earned has been really dedicated to God. If you have inherited any share of the property, consider that you have got it with the condition of trusteeship! This wealth is not to be utilized for your personal pleasures, but is to be treated as a sacred trust to be expended for public good.”

On the very day of Jamnalal's death, Gandhiji wrote an obituary note, reproduced below, which was published in the *Harijan* of 15th February 1942, (p. 37). Written with great restraint, it sums up briefly Gandhiji's estimate of Jamnalal and his work:

“In Seth Jamnalal Bajaj death has taken a mighty man. Whenever I wrote of wealthy men becoming trustees of their wealth for the common good I always had this merchant-prince principally in mind. If his trusteeship did not reach the ideal, the fault was not his. I deliberately restrained him. I did not want him in his enthusiasm to take a single step which in his cool moments he might regret. His simplicity was all his own. Every house he built for himself became a Dharmashala. His contribution as a Satyagrahi was of the highest order. In political discussions he held his own. His judgments were sound. As an act of renunciation his last was the crown of all. He wanted to take up a constructive activity to which he could devote the rest of his life and in which he could use all his abilities. This was the preservation of the cattle wealth of India personified in the cow. He threw himself into the work with a single-mindedness and zeal I had never seen surpassed. His generosity knew no distinction of race, creed or colour. He wanted to perform a rare thing for a busy man. He wanted to control his thoughts so as to prevent a single intruder from coming in. The world is poorer for his death. The country has lost one of the bravest of its servants. Janakidevi, the widow, has decided to take up the work to which he had dedicated himself. She has divested herself of all her personal property valued at about two and a half lakhs. May God enable her to fulfil the trust she has undertaken.”

Gandhiji had been too preoccupied in consoling the bereaved family members and trying to instil

courage in them to give any thought to the loss sustained by him personally. It was only later that he realized the magnitude and full implications of the loss in relation to himself. He gave vent to his feelings in another article entitled "Fiery Ordeal" published in the *Harijan* of 22nd February, (p. 53). It is quoted below:

•
"Twenty-two years ago a young man with the bloom of thirty springs upon him came to me and said, "I want to ask something of you."

"Ask, and it shall be given, if it is at all within my power to give," I replied with some surprise.

"Regard me as your son Devadas," the young man said.

"Agreed," I replied. "Only I am giving nothing, you are the giver."

The young man was no other than Jamnalal Bajaj. People know something of what this sacrament meant. But few know the extent of the part played by the self-adopted son. Never before, I can say, was a mortal blessed with a 'son' like him. Of course I have many sons and daughters in the sense that they have done some of my work. But Jamnalalji surrendered himself and his without reservation. There is hardly any activity of mine in which I did not receive his full-hearted co-operation and in which it did not prove to be of the greatest value. He was gifted with a quick intelligence. He was a merchant-prince. He placed at my disposal his ample possessions. He became guardian of my time and my health. And he did it all for the public good. The day he

died he and Janakidevi were to come to me. But he died almost at the very hour he should have been with me. Never before have I felt so forlorn except when Maganlal was snatched from me fourteen years ago. But I had no doubt then, as I have none now, that a calamity of that kind is a blessing in disguise. God wants to try me through and through. I live in the faith that He will give me the strength too to pass through the ordeal."

Messages of condolence started pouring in from far and near, from all corners of the country from Jamnalal's numerous friends and co-workers, who had come to love and respect him as a friend, philosopher and guide. Newspapers and journals all over the country were flooded with sincere tributes paid to his memory, not only by leaders in all walks of life, but also by many a humble worker who had come in personal touch with him and known his munificence and magnanimity.

Jamnalal was not a mere individual. He had come to be regarded as a national institution. Gandhiji felt that the best way to perpetuate his memory was to make arrangements to carry on his national work without interruption. He, therefore, called a meeting of Jamnalal's friends at Wardha on the 20th February to find ways and means to do this.

In a letter addressed to these friends Gandhiji wrote:

"You are aware how intimate was the relationship between Jamnalal and myself. There was no work of mine in which I did not receive his fullest co-operation in body, mind and wealth. Neither he nor I had any attraction for what is

The meeting was attended by a large number of friends and continued for two days. Addressing them Gandhiji said that a true memorial to Jamnalal could not be raised in erecting a statue or a pillar in his memory. The best way of perpetuating his memory would be for all his friends to share the burden of his immense work and carry it on to fulfilment, for no one man could shoulder the entire responsibility.

In an obituary written in *Harijan* of 22nd February 1942 (pp. 45-47), Mahadev Desai summed up the life and work of this great and noble son of Mother India. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had expressed in a few and telling words the feeling of desolation that had come over the entire country, which Mahadevbhai has quoted. Mahadevbhai's article is partially reproduced here as a fitting conclusion to this biography:

**"The angel
Came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God
 had blessed,
And Lo! Seth Jaman's name led all the rest."**

Those who knew Jamnalalji—and the hundreds of telegrams that have been pouring in from places far and near, show that the number of that blessed company was great—will not feel unhappy over the alteration I have made in Leigh Hunt's famous lines about Abou Ben Adhem. I do not know if on the fateful afternoon of the 11th Jamnalalji had a vision of any Angel come to receive him in the region of the blessed. But if he had, I am sure he must have spoken to him:

‘Low but cheerly still; and said,
I pray thee then,
Write me as one that loves his fellowmen.’”

Never since the sudden and premature death of Maganlal Gandhi in 1928 had any bereavement dealt such a staggering blow to Gandhiji as the sudden and premature death of Jamnalalji. Words fail me when I attempt to describe his feeling of desolation. For two days he bore up bravely, consoling the bereaved widow and the aged mother, but on the third day he broke down as he was saying: “Childless people adopt sons. But Jamnalalji adopted me as father. He should have been an heir to my all. Instead he has left me an heir to his all.” The feeling of desolation is, if I may say so, universal. Wardha and Sevagram, even with Bapu and Ba in it, look dreary without Jamnalalji. The numerous institutions he had founded or helped in founding will experience a piercing sense of void without his sunny presence. Even the meetings of the Congress Working Committee must be dull and dreary without his scintillating and outspoken commonsense.

The feeling of loneliness that has come over most of us may be judged from these few lines from Vallabhbhai's letter:

'He had vowed not to sit in a train or a motor car, and his vow was to terminate on the 15th. He had promised thereafter to come and have rest with me in Hajira. Instead he has gone to his eternal rest. No death could have been better. But as the proverb goes, 'Let a hundred die, but not the nourisher of a hundred.' Hundreds upon hundreds of our workers in various parts of our country must be shedding silent tears in their cottages. Bapu has lost a true son; Janaki-devi and the family a true shelter; the country a loyal servant; the Congress a stately pillar; the cow her true friend and many institutions their patron; and we have lost a beloved blood-brother. I feel so desolate and forlorn.'

Everyone mourns his loss. Amongst the mourners are not only his friends of the Working Committee, not his friends in the business world like the Birlas and the Tatas, Sir Purushottamdas and others, not only his numerous co-workers, the humblest of whom he had brothered and befriended, but countless others who received his help without the world ever knowing it. The meeting to mourn his death held in Wardha was addressed by members of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, and a Muslim barrister paid him a fine tribute. He said, without Jamnalalji's sympathy and timely help the Anglo-Urdu School would not have been in existence. He had the priceless gift of friendship which endeared him to all, and everyone under

his roof felt completely at home. He had literally broken the barriers of the family of his blood relationship, and made himself member of a vaster family to which men and women of all races and creeds belonged. Above all he had broken the barrier that wealth and position often create. His employees and his servants were members of his family, and they shared their joys and sorrows with him in an unstinted measure. There are few wealthy men on earth so utterly void of affection and snobbery, so utterly innocent of possession and property (I mean ownership), so utterly free from communalism or provincialism, and so overflowing with the milk of human kindness.

Like some of those rare men who are gifted with the power of sublimating their desires and their passions, he was gifted with the power to sublimate his sense of possession. He followed the master cheerfully through all the numerous vicissitudes of the latter's life, because although 'he had great possessions', he had divested himself of the sense of proprietorship in them. . . .

Sturdy commonsense and innate business skill enabled him to earn lakhs and give in charity five times the wealth he had inherited from the adoptive father. If he stayed at home in response to the father's importunations, he knew he was a trustee of the father's wealth. Consciously or unconsciously that was his first lesson in the theory of trusteeship. The father who had adopted him taught that first lesson, the father he later adopted initiated him into the deep implications of it.

Similarly he had the virtue of fearlessness which the absence of a slavish education had left unimpaired. He had silenced Tommies travelling first and second and trying to bully him; he would not serve wines at a party he gave in honour of a Governor; to a Commissioner who said that the Chief Commissioner would not open his school unless he promised to be more loyal, he had said he would do without that costly privilege, and to a D.S.P. whom he was interviewing and who had remarked: "How I wish the boat that is carrying Tilak to England may go to the bottom of the sea," he had said: "You forget that there are numerous Englishmen on the boat!"

The fearlessness came into full play during the twenty years of his public life under Gandhiji's leadership. President Kruger was unlettered and Generalissimo Chiang-kai-shek knows no English. Ignorance of English was no handicap to them. It had in fact left the native vigour of their minds unspoilt. Even so with Jamnalalji. He could see the implications of an intricately worded Congress resolution quicker than many other members, and he would often raise his warning voice lest the Committee should put their foot into seemingly innocent propositions. It was he who raised earliest the question of moral and material co-operation in the war and who said that a nation of shopkeepers could not be duped by the promise of moral co-operation.

Treasurer of the nation's wealth, he was also the treasurer of the nation's honour. He was among the very few capitalists who recklessly

threw themselves in the fray for the nation's freedom and bore the rigours of imprisonment every time the call was made. His faith burnt brightest when that of others flickered in times of stress and strain and dark despair. It was to revive the faith of others when Gandhiji was in jail under a six years' term of imprisonment that he donated Rs. 2,50,000 and founded the Gandhi Seva Sangh. Politics he could understand, but he often regarded it a sorry game which might soil heart and soul. And so he had early set his heart on the constructive part of the Congress programme. Khadi, to which he gave his wealth, his time, his organizing ability and his devotion; Harijan uplift for which he risked the wrath of his hide-bound community, threw open the first big temple in India to the Harijans, and gave to Gandhiji the whole of the income of the Harijan village—Sevagram—for the Harijans' welfare; Hindu-Muslim unity for which he cheerfully bore heavy blows in the course of a riot, and earnestness which won him distinguished men like the Khan Sahebs as brothers and women like Raihanabai and the Captain sisters as sisters; village industries, for which he gave away a precious part of his patrimony; women's cause to which he devoted a good deal of his wealth and time; and the cow to whose cause he dedicated his life.

Who could have been blessed with a richer life of service? And yet one could notice in various utterances of his a longing for something he had not yet achieved. His sense of truth and justice was keen even to harshness, so far at any

rate as he was concerned. Before he met Gandhiji he had worshipped at many shrines. Gandhiji seemed to settle his mind, and Gandhiji's fierce passion for truth made him long to be his son. "Blessed will be the moment when I shall be worthy of being known as Mahatmaji's son. It is due to his infinite mercy that I have learnt at least to see my weaknesses and failings," he wrote in 1923. He was often overwhelmed by a sense of his spiritual shortcomings, and he often longed to retire from all public activities. It was this spirit that endeared him to Gandhiji more than the sacrifice of material possessions, almost incomparably great as this was. And that was what made him the proud recipient of two characteristic letters from Gandhiji written from jail.*

Nourished on food like this, he grew from self-introspection to more self-introspection. Constant companionship with Vinoba, who had managed the Satyagrahashram at Wardha since the beginning, was a great help in the process. He had immense self-confidence. He knew that, if some day the crown of thorns of Congress Presidentship were to be bestowed on him, he would be equal to the burden. But his heart quailed when he thought of the spiritual journey he had still to do before entering the Kingdom of Heaven. It was not because he had riches. Ownership in these he had cast away. But there were other things needed. And in order to purge himself of all dross he took the greatest step of his life — dedicating himself to the service of the cow.

* *Vide* pp. 75-76.

He left his house, the house which had lodged guests like the Presidents of the Congress, Lord Lothian, H.E. Tai-Chi-Tao, Dr. John Mott, and the Egyptian Delegation, and went to live in a hut which he called Gopuri. Here he did his spinning, tended his cows with the devotion of King Dileepa, and kept a careful record of his thoughts and acts from day to day. As we visited the hut on the day he passed away, we saw on the little desk in front of his feet his diary written up complete to the day of his death. Even so his life was complete and regular and God-fearing. He had dedicated this to Mother Cow, in order that she may be for him the *Kamadugha** that Cow Nandini had been to King Dileepa. Whether the death that came to him was the blessing given him by the cow it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was. For no death could be more desirable. Almost until the last moment he was thinking of his cow and his Gopuri, and when the end came it was so sudden and so quick that it seemed as though he had slipped into blissful peace. But whether the cow had really proved his *Kamadugha*, there is no doubt that by his dedicated life he had rendered himself Gandhiji's *Kamadugha*. It was he who had made it possible for Gandhiji to settle first in Wardha and then in Sevagram, and it was he who was the living link between the outside world and Gandhiji. His death removes the link and leaves both Gandhiji and the outside world much poorer."

*Fulfiller of all desires.

CHAPTER XII
LANDMARKS OF JAMNALAL'S LIFE

- 1889 Born on November 4, at Kashi-ka-bas.
- 1894 Comes to Wardha as adopted grandson of Seth Bachhraj Bajaj.
- 1896 Goes to school, February 1.
- 1900 Leaves school, March 31.
- 1902 Married to Janakidevi.
- 1906 Donation to *Kesari*.
- 1907 Bachhraj died; letter of renunciation to Bachhraj.
- 1908 Becomes honorary magistrate.
- 1915 Meets Gandhiji.
- 1917 Created Rai Bahadur; Entry into politics.
- 1920 Elected Chairman, Reception Committee of Nagpur Session of Congress. Elected Treasurer of Congress.
- 1921 Joins non-co-operation movement. Founds Wardha Satyagrahashram. Vinoba arrives at Wardha. Surrenders title of Rai Bahadur.
- 1923 Leads Nagpur National Flag Satyagraha, sentenced to 18 months' jail and Rs. 3,000 fine. Founds Gandhi Seva Sangh.
- 1924 Elected President of Nagpur Pradesh Congress Committee.
- 1925 Elected treasurer of Charkha Sangh. Founds Sasta Sahitya Mandal.
- 1927 Elected President of Charkha Sangh.
- 1928 Threw open Lakshminarayan temple at Wardha to Harijans.
- 1930 Elected Leader of Salt Satyagraha camp at Vile Parle. Sentenced to two years' jail.

- 1931 Elected President, Karnatak Provincial Congress Conference.
- 1933 Jailed again.
- 1934 Gandhiji goes to Wardha for permanent stay. Takes up work of Bihar' Earthquake Relief Fund.
- 1936 Shegaon given as gift to Gandhiji. Gandhiji names it Sevagram and lives there.
- 1937 Elected President of Madras Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.
- 1938 Elected President of Jaipur State Praja Mandal.
- 1939 Interned in Jaipur in consequence of Satyagraha in State.
- 1941 Sentenced to jail for anti-war propaganda.
- 1942 Founds Goseva Sangh at Wardha. Death on February 11.

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